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:**

COSSBA LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY ITEMS – Actions and items COSSBA has taken to advance our policy goals:

1. **COSSBA Government Affiars Webinar -** COSSBA will be hosting a free webinar for members "*The Federal Budget, Education Funding & the U.S. Department of Education*" on Thursday, November 6 at 2:00 p.m. EST. Presenting will be Sarah Abernathy the Executive Director of the Committee for Education Funding (*COSSBA is a member*) and our partners from Bose Public Affairs Group.

   You can register for the webinar here: https://bit.ly/4qgrXDU

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
   - **Child Nutrition**
     - **Court Blocks USDA Contingency Plan for November SNAP Benefits**: Two federal judges on Friday ordered the Trump administration to use

emergency money to keep the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) going and the Administration has agreed.

2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
    - **Impact on State School Board Associations**

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
    - **Government Shutdown Threatens Head Start Programs Across the US**: Due to the ongoing federal government shutdown, Head Start programs across the country face the prospect of losing their federal funding as of November 1st, 2025.
    - **New America Examines AI, Technology, Future of Early Literacy:** On Monday, New America **hosted an event** titled, "Growing Readers in a World of Screens and AI," exploring how new technologies are changing early literacy and childhood learning.
    - **Cassidy Introduces LIFE with AI Act to Modernize FERPA:** On Tuesday, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chair Bill Cassidy (R-LA) **introduced the Learning Innovation and Family Empowerment (LIFE) with AI Act,** legislation designed to update student privacy protections and guide the responsible use of artificial intelligence in K–12 education.
    - **Cato Institute Hosts Discussion on Democrats, Public Education:** On Thursday, the Cato Institute **hosted a discussion** on democratic control of public education featuring Professor Vladimir Kogan of Ohio State University, author of *No Adult Left Behind*, and Professor Charlie Wilson, law professor emeritus at Ohio State, with moderation by Cato's Neal McCluskey.
    - **Education Reform Now Highlights Federal Scholarship Tax Credit:** On Thursday, Education Reform Now hosted a webinar on the ***Educational Choice for Children Act* (ECCA),** also known as the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit (FSTC) program, led by CEO Jorge Elorza and Starlee Coleman of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

4. **New Publications**
    - **Issue Brief: How a Government Shutdown Hurts Kids**
      First Focus on Children (September 29, 2025)
      This brief explains that a federal government shutdown threatens the stability of essential programs that support children's education, health, nutrition, and family security, delaying benefits, deepening financial hardship, and undermining long-term progress for families.

5. **In the News**
    - **Trump Moves To Block Public Servants From Loan Forgiveness Based On Ideology**
      The Washington Post (October 30, 2025)
    - **Schools Brace For SNAP Benefits Lapse**
      K-12 Dive (October 30, 2025)
    - **Judge Indefinitely Halts Shutdown Layoffs Noting Human Toll**

NPR (October 29, 2025)
- **Shutdown, Federal RIFs Crippling Native Programs And Violating Trust Obligations, Leaders Tell Senate**
  Tribal Business News (October 29, 2025)
- **Educators Push For Virtual Schooling In Response To ICE Raids**
  K-12 Dive (October 24, 2025)

6. **Weekly Calendar - What's coming up this week?**
   - **Symposium on Young American Men**: The National Press Club will hold its 2025 Symposium on Young American Men, focusing on "skyrocketing mental health crises and declining college enrollment to digital addiction and social isolation."
     Monday at 10am ET
   - **Registered Apprenticeships**: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee will hold a hearing on "Registered Apprenticeship: Scaling the Workforce for the Future."
     Wednesday at 10am ET
   - **Education Reimagined**: The Cato Institute will hold a webinar on "Education Reimagined: A Conversation with Kerry McDonald on Joyful Learning."
     Friday at 12pm ET

7. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
   - **Senate floor**
     - Nominations
     - H.R. 5371, Continuing Appropriations
   - **House floor**: Out of session, though could return for appropriations considerations.

8. **Important U.S. House and Senate Links**

9. **About BPAG**

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1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

CHILD NUTRITION

COURT BLOCKS USDA CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR NOVEMBER SNAP BENEFITS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had **announced in an October 24, 2025 memo** that it would not use emergency contingency funds to cover Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for November 2025, affecting about 42 million Americans as the federal government shutdown prevents Congress from funding the program. **The memo** explained that the roughly $5 billion contingency fund is "not legally available" for regular monthly benefits because it can only supplement appropriated funds when those are insufficient. Since no fiscal 2026 appropriation exists— "Due to Congressional Democrats' refusal to pass a clean continuing resolution"—the USDA says it cannot legally access those funds. USDA stated the contingency funds must be reserved for emergencies, particularly the Disaster SNAP program, which aids residents affected by hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. The memo also rejected shifting money from other nutrition programs, noting that Child Nutrition Programs have already transferred $23 billion from Section 32 tariff funds to sustain operations, which are also temporarily supporting the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). However, **two federal judges on Friday ordered the Trump administration to use emergency money** to keep SNAP going. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent suggested that SNAP benefits could restart as soon as Wednesday after court order to release the funds. “There’s a process that has to be followed, so we’ve got to figure out what the process is,” Bessent said yesterday on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

On Monday afternoon, the USDA agreed to use the remaining money in the contingency fund to cover a portion of SNAP benefits for November. It is likely the funding will be able to cover somewhere between half and two-thirds of the monthly benefit allotment for recipients. The Administration said it would soon produce a table for state agencies to caculate the reduced benefits available for each recipient and would begin disbursing funds shortly after those calculations. It’s unclear exactly when benefits will begin flowing since many states will have to update their payment systems to reflect the changes. In the meantime, some states – like Louisiana and Virginia – have stepped in to say they would temporarily use state funds to backfill gaps in federal funding for SNAP.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Last week, the Senate held its 13th procedural vote on the House-passed continuing resolution (CR) that would reopen the government through November 21. The motion continues to fail to reach the 60-vote threshold needed to advance. On the Senate floor, Majority Leader John Thune (R–SD) chastised Democrats for their refusal to support the measure, saying “the Democratic Party is the party that will not take yes for an answer.”

Looking ahead, insiders are increasingly discussing how the shutdown might ultimately resolve—and how the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 spending process could be shaped. One scenario gaining traction is that once the government reopens, Congress and the administration will proceed rapidly to pass the FY 2026 appropriations bills that have been under negotiation behind the scenes. Observers note that because none of the full twelve FY 2026 spending bills are yet signed into law, the pressure to move toward “a package plus clean CR” is rising. Under this view, the reopening CR would serve as a short-term bridge, and the actual bargaining on toplines, health-care subsidies, and spending caps would occur immediately thereafter in a clustered minibus set of bills, rather than a drawn-out roll-out of separate bills. Meanwhile, some caution that the longer the shutdown drags on, the more likely Congress will default to another CR or omnibus rather than a textbook full-year appropriations cycle.

Once again, education advocates and supporters of every other cause are looking for movement. Members of the House haven’t been in session for weeks while their colleagues continue to vote on the persistently doomed CR, but also hold hearings, introduce bills, and periodically try to vote on other measures on the Senate floor. While it feels like there may be some positive developments, this shutdown seems likely to break the record for the longest in history later this week.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

The shutdown is already beginning to have concrete effects on nutrition and child-serving programs. As mentioned earlier, some states are alerting residents that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for roughly 42 million Americans will run out starting November 1 unless funding is restored. Meanwhile, school breakfast and lunch programs – though currently continuing under carry-over funds – face the risk of reimbursement delays if the funding lapse persists. However, two federal judges on Friday ordered the Trump administration to use emergency money to keep SNAP going, which as of Monday afternoon, USDA has agreed to do.

In early-childhood education, the Head Start Program is being singled out for risk: the National Head Start Association warns that over 65,000 children and families may be affected if the shutdown continues. In addition to Head Start, schools that rely on Impact Aid funding will **no longer receive** their monthly payments as of November 1.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN THREATENS HEAD START PROGRAMS ACROSS THE US

Due to the ongoing federal government shutdown, Head Start programs across the country face the prospect of losing their federal funding as of November 1st. Head Start, founded in 1965, is one of the largest and only federally funded early childhood education initiatives that provides preschool education, health services, nutrition, and child-care support for low-income families. According to **estimates**, about 134 programs across 41 states and Puerto Rico – serving roughly 65,000 children – will see their funding expire without a resolution to the shutdown. Of those states, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, and Ohio will likely see the largest impact. Research has shown that Head Start programs contribute to both short- and long-term benefits for its participants, including less chronic absenteeism, improved graduation rates, and increased enrollment and completion of higher education. Because of the impending cuts on, the National Head Start Association (NHSA) recently **urged Congress** to end the government shutdown and safeguard funding for Head Start programs. "For thousands of families, Head Start is not optional – it is essential," said Yasmina Vinci, Executive Director for NHSA, underscoring the direct impact of the government shutdown on American families. The Ohio Head Start Association, for example, noted that seven of their providers, serving over 3,700 children, are **at risk of closure** because their federal funds will be completely exhausted by November 1st. If the shutdown continues as expected, Head Start programs across the country will begin to temporarily close, jeopardizing children's access to vital services, their parents' ability to work and have stable childcare, and the livelihoods of staff working in those centers.

NEW AMERICA EXAMINES AI, TECHNOLOGY, FUTURE OF EARLY LITERACY

On Monday, New America **hosted an event** titled, "Growing Readers in a World of Screens and AI," exploring how new technologies are changing early literacy and childhood learning. The discussion brought together researchers, educators, and technology innovators to consider how reading education can thrive in an increasingly digital environment. The event was moderated by Lisa Guernsey, Senior Fellow in Education Policy at New America, and featured Michael Levine of the Kapor Center, Ralph Smith of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Drew McCann of LitLab.ai, Dan Lee of Lirvana Labs, and Youngna Park of Sago Mini Studios. The speakers discussed how technology can both support and disrupt literacy development, emphasizing that screens are not inherently harmful but must be used intentionally to strengthen—rather than replace—human interaction and high-quality instruction. Levine argued that AI-powered tools have the potential to personalize reading experiences and expand access to early learning resources but warned that evidence must guide their implementation. Smith highlighted the persistent literacy gap between children from higher- and lower-income families and called for investment in technologies that promote interactive reading experiences for all. McCann, Lee, and Park described how their organizations are designing educational apps and AI programs that encourage creativity, curiosity, and engagement rather than passive consumption. Guernsey concluded that the challenge for educators and parents is to "build a reading culture that thrives alongside technology, rather than despite it." The speakers agreed that collaboration between educators, developers, and policymakers will be essential to ensuring that the next generation of readers benefits from both human relationships and technological innovation.

CASSIDY INTRODUCES LIFE WITH AI ACT TO MODERNIZE FERPA

On Tuesday, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chair Bill Cassidy (R-LA) **introduced the Learning Innovation and Family Empowerment (LIFE) with AI Act,** legislation designed to update student privacy protections and guide the responsible use of artificial intelligence in K–12 education. The bill aims to modernize the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to reflect today's technology landscape, giving parents greater transparency and control over how schools and education technology providers collect and use student data. The LIFE with AI Act would create a federal "Golden Seal of Excellence in Student Data Privacy," recognizing schools that adopt advanced parental consent and opt-out systems, while requiring clear, year-round online tools for families to manage directory-information sharing. The bill prohibits the use of student photos for facial-recognition AI without explicit parental consent and bars contracts with yearbook vendors that fail to disclose such practices. It also expands FERPA's definition of "education records" to include all student-related data held by schools or their contractors. To improve accountability, the legislation directs the U.S. Department of Education to publish a public list of third-party vendors found in violation of student data-privacy standards and to develop model contract language to ensure consistent protections across school districts. It codifies the Department's Privacy Technical Assistance Center to provide ongoing guidance to schools and ed-tech providers. Finally, the bill supports responsible classroom innovation by funding teacher training on AI integration, updating Title II-A professional-development uses to include emerging technologies, and prioritizing AI tutoring and personalized-learning research through the Institute of Education Sciences and the Small Business Innovation Research program.

CATO INSTITUTE HOSTS DISCUSSION ON DEMOCRATS, PUBLIC EDUCATION

On Thursday, the Cato Institute **hosted a discussion** on democratic control of public education featuring Professor Vladimir Kogan of Ohio State University, author of *No Adult Left Behind*, and Professor Charlie Wilson, law professor emeritus at Ohio State, with moderation by Cato's Neal McCluskey. Kogan argued that local democratic governance undermines educational quality, citing evidence that the 13,000–14,000 elected school boards in the United States create a misalignment between voter priorities and student needs. He noted that 75–80 percent of school board voters lack school-aged children and that incumbent reelection rates are unrelated to student performance. He also referenced research by John Valant (Brookings, 2020) showing that 2016 Trump vote share, not COVID case rates, predicted school reopening decisions—illustrating partisan polarization that began within two weeks of President Trump's disagreement with Dr.

Anthony Fauci. Using Cato's "public schooling battle map" data linked to Stanford achievement data, Kogan found that community conflicts over topics such as free expression, evolution, and race correlated with lower academic performance. He highlighted an eight-month mascot dispute in Coachella Valley, California, as an example of diverted attention and proposed reforms such as moving school board elections to even-numbered years to increase turnout among parents and expanding school choice. Wilson countered that these were "solutions in search of a problem," drawing on his four successful campaigns as a former school board and National School Boards Association president. He argued that voters, regardless of parental status, do value student learning; that aligning elections with national contests would drown out education coverage; and that well-funded public schools can match private-school outcomes—citing Minnesota's Wayzata Public High School and Blake School, both averaging 1,400 SAT scores at vastly different costs. He concluded that integrated public schools reduce polarization, invoking Gordon Allport's contact hypothesis.

EDUCATION REFORM NOW HIGHLIGHTS FEDERAL SCHOLARSHIP TAX CREDIT

On Thursday, Education Reform Now hosted a webinar on the ***Educational Choice for Children Act* (ECCA)**, also known as the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit (FSTC) program, led by CEO Jorge Elorza and Starlee Coleman of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Beginning January 1, 2027, the ECCA will allow taxpayers to redirect up to $1,700 of their federal tax liability to approved Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) as a dollar-for-dollar tax credit—not a voucher. ERN estimates that if just 1 percent of eligible taxpayers participate, the program could generate more than $800 million annually nationwide; at 30 percent participation, California could raise over $3 billion and Texas about $2 billion. Elorza called the ECCA a "golden opportunity" for governors to show they are responding to parents rather than political orthodoxy, providing new education resources at no cost to state budgets. Unlike most state tax-credit programs that fund only private-school tuition, the ECCA covers tutoring, technology, field trips, SAT/ACT prep, and disability services—including for public-school and charter-school students. Scholarships are limited to families earning up to 300 percent of area median income, and SGOs must spend 90 percent of donations on scholarships. Coleman noted that SGOs could specialize in unique services—such as equine-therapy scholarships—showing the program's flexibility beyond traditional expenses. Polling indicates 65–78 percent support across states, with strong approval exceeding moderate support. Governors must opt in by December 31, 2026; Elorza encouraged early commitments so communities can prepare. Taxpayers in non-participating states may still donate to SGOs elsewhere, meaning those states risk losing resources. The Treasury Department is expected to issue preliminary guidance in early 2026 on questions such as whether governors can opt in partially and whether joint filers receive $1,700 or $3,400 credits. In the meantime, Organizations including Step Up for Students, Stand Together Trust, Educational Freedom Foundation, and Yes Every Kid are offering technical help to new SGOs.

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4. New Publications

Issue Brief: How a Government Shutdown Hurts Kids
First Focus on Children (September 29, 2025)
This brief explains that a federal government shutdown threatens the stability of essential programs that support children's education, health, nutrition, and family security, delaying benefits, deepening financial hardship, and undermining long-term progress for families.

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5. In the News

Trump Moves To Block Public Servants From Loan Forgiveness Based On Ideology
The Washington Post (October 30, 2025)

Schools Brace For SNAP Benefits Lapse
K-12 Dive (October 30, 2025)

Judge Indefinitely Halts Shutdown Layoffs Noting Human Toll
NPR (October 29, 2025)

Shutdown, Federal RIFs Crippling Native Programs And Violating Trust Obligations, Leaders Tell Senate
Tribal Business News (October 29, 2025)

Educators Push For Virtual Schooling In Response To ICE Raids
K-12 Dive (October 24, 2025)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Monday, November 3, 2025

Webinar: Symposium on Young American Men
Subject: The National Press Club will hold its 2025 Symposium on Young American Men, focusing on "skyrocketing mental health crises and declining college enrollment to digital addiction and social isolation."
Participants: Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX); Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ); Sen. James Lankford (R-OK); and others.
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Wednesday, November 5, 2025

Hearing: Registered Apprenticeships
Subject: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee will hold a hearing on "Registered Apprenticeship: Scaling the Workforce for the Future."

Witnesses: Josh Laney, Competency-Based Education Network; Laticia McCane, The Apprenticeship School, PA; Gardner Carrick, The Manufacturing Institute; Josh Downey, International Union of Operating Engineers; and Brent Booker, Laborers' International Union of North America.
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Contact: Live stream available **here.**

Friday, November 7, 2025

Webinar: Education Reimagined
Subject: The Cato Institute will hold a webinar on "Education Reimagined: A Conversation with Kerry McDonald on *Joyful Learning."*
Participants: Colleen Hroncich, Cato policy analyst, Cato Institute; and Kerry McDonald, adjunct scholar and author of "Joyful Learning: How to Find Freedom, Happiness, and Success Beyond Conventional Schooling."
Time: 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

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7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:

- Nominations
- **H.R. 5371**, Continuing Appropriations
- Potential consideration of other appropriations measures

House Floor: Out of session though could return for appropriations considerations

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8. 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

For more information, please visit our website.

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