



NOVEMBER 2017 PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

CONGRESS

Murray, Senators Demand DeVos Enforce Civil Rights Laws in Schools as Incidents of Harassment, Bullying and Racism Are on the Rise Following President Trump's Election

(Courtesy of the Senate HELP Committee)

Led by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, nine Members of the Senate HELP Committee sent a letter today to U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos urging her to address the dramatic increase in reports of harassment, bullying and intimidation in schools since the election of President Trump.

"We are deeply concerned that President Trump's tweets and remarks have normalized bigotry, racism, homophobia, and misogyny and that his behavior has fostered discrimination, enabled bullies, and threatened the safety of students," wrote the Senators. "Schools have a responsibility to ensure that all students—no matter their race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or country of origin—feel safe in their learning environments."

In their letter, the Senators noted the alarming number of hateful incidents in schools and on college campuses across the country, including the increase in racist flyers and white supremacist recruitment, in addition to the many other incidences of discrimination and harassment on campus. These incidents are even occurring in elementary and secondary schools, where children have built "walls" to keep classmates out or started hostile chants in the cafeteria.

Tomorrow, the Senate HELP Committee will hold a hearing entitled, "Exploring Free Speech on College Campuses," in which Democrats will discuss the growing number of incidents of hate speech on college campuses—and explore what university officials can be doing to use their First Amendment rights to speak out against hate speech and violence happening on their campuses. You can view the hearing [here](#).

In addition to Senator Murray, the letter was signed by Senators Sanders (I-VT), Franken (D-MN), Bennet (D-CO), Whitehouse (D-RI), Baldwin (D-WI), Murphy (D-CT), Warren (D-MA), and Hassan (D-NH).

Read the full letter [here](#).

Administration

Changing of the Guard—Departures

- **Hon. Kim R. Ford**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education

- **Denise Forte**, Staff Director (Minority), House Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives

U.S. Department of Education Could Scale Back Help on Loans

(Courtesy of PBS News Hour/Education)

The Education Department is considering only partially forgiving federal loans for students defrauded by for-profit colleges, according to department officials, abandoning the Obama administration's policy of erasing that debt.

Under President Barack Obama, tens of thousands of students deceived by now-defunct for-profit schools had over \$550 million in such loans canceled.

But President Donald Trump's education secretary, Betsy DeVos, is working on a plan that could grant such students just partial relief, according to department officials. The department may look at the average earnings of students in similar programs and schools to determine how much debt to wipe away.

The officials were not authorized to publicly comment on the issue and spoke on condition of anonymity.

If DeVos goes ahead, the change could leave many students scrambling after expecting full loan forgiveness, based on the previous administration's track record. It was not immediately clear how many students might be affected.

A department spokeswoman did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday. But the Trump team has given hints of a new approach.

In August, the department extended its contract with a staffing agency to speed up the processing of a backlog of loan forgiveness claims. In the procurement notice, the department said that "policy changes may necessitate certain claims already processed be revisited to assess other attributes." The department would not further clarify the meaning of that notice.

DeVos' review caused an outcry from student loan advocates, who said the idea of giving defrauded students only partial loan relief was unjustified and unfair because many of their classmates had already gotten full loan cancellation. Critics say the Trump administration, which has ties to the for-profit sector, is looking out for industry interests.

Earlier this year, Trump paid \$25 million to settle charges his Trump University misled students.

"Anything other than full cancellation is not a valid outcome," said Eileen Connor, a litigator at Harvard University's Project on Predatory Student Lending, which has represented hundreds of defrauded students of the now-shuttered Corinthian Colleges. "The nature of the wrong that was done to them, the harm is even bigger than the loans that they have."

"Even more importantly, it is completely unfair that a happenstance of timing is going to mean that one student who's been defrauded is going to have full cancellation and the next is not," Connor said.

A federal regulation known as borrower defense allows students at for-profit colleges and other vocational programs to have their loans forgiven if it is determined that the students were defrauded by the schools. That rule dates to the early 1990s. But it was little used until the demise of Corinthian and ITT for-profit chains in recent years caused tens of thousands of students to request that the government cancel their loans.

In the last few months of the Obama administration, the Education Department updated the rule to add protections for students, shift more financial responsibility onto the schools and prevent schools from having students sign away their right to sue a school.

That change was set to take effect in July, but DeVos has frozen it and is working on a new version. She argued that the Obama regulation was too broad and could cancel the loans of some students without a sound basis.

DeVos has come under criticism for delaying consideration of over 65,000 applications for loan forgiveness under the borrower defense rule. The agency hasn't approved a single claim since DeVos took office in February.

Jennifer Wang, an expert with the Institute of College Access and Success, said the Obama administration was providing full loan cancellations to students.

"It would be totally different from what was happening under the last administration," Wang said. "It's not equitable; it's not fair for students. If she provides partial relief, it's that she only cares what's fair for schools and not students."

Abby Shafroth, an attorney at the National Consumer Law Center, said the agency could be faced with lawsuits, especially from Corinthian students, whose classmates had received full forgiveness.

U.S. Department of Labor Names Apprenticeship Task Force Members

(Courtesy of Advance CTE)

On October 16, U.S. Secretary of Labor Acosta [announced](#) the members who will serve on the Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion. Members include representatives from education, business, industry, and labor. The Task Force was one of the components outlined in the Executive Order, "Expanding Apprenticeship in America," that President Trump [signed in June](#).

U.S. Department of Education Announces Proposed Priorities for Competitive Grants, Seeks Comments

(Courtesy of Advance CTE)

On October 12, the U.S. Department of Education [announced](#) the proposed priorities for awarding competitive grants. USDoE has asked the public to weigh in on these priorities through a [30-day public comment process](#) and will later announce the finalized priorities, which may be used to award competitive grants going forward. The proposed priorities are listed below:

- Empowering Families to Choose a High-Quality Education that Meets Their Child's Unique Needs
- Promoting Innovation and Efficiency, Streamlining Education with an Increased Focus on Improving Student Outcomes, and Providing Increased Value to Students and Taxpayers
- Fostering Flexible and Affordable Paths to Obtaining Knowledge and Skills
- Fostering Knowledge and Promoting the Development of Skills that Prepare Students to be Informed, Thoughtful, and Productive Individuals and Citizens
- Meeting the Unique Needs of Students and Children, including those with Disabilities and/or with Unique Gifts and Talents
- Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education, With a Particular Focus on Computer Science
- Promoting Literacy
- Promoting Effective Instruction in Classrooms and Schools

- Promoting Economic Opportunity
- Encouraging Improved School Climate and Safer and More Respectful Interactions in a Positive and Safe Educational Environment
- Ensuring that Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families Have Access to High-Quality Educational Choices

Trump Administration Will Keep Up Civil Rights Data Collection

(Courtesy of Benjamin Wermund with help from Mel Leonor and Kimberly Hefling)

The Education Department has made clear that the Office for Civil Rights plans to keep polling the nation's schools on a slew of issues, including discipline, bullying and access to courses and resources—assuaging fears of civil rights groups that the Trump administration may roll back what they see as crucial data collection efforts. The administration [recently responded to a wave of public comments](#) it received about the next round of data collection—an effort that had been greatly expanded under the Obama administration—and the responses make clear that the administration plans to change little about the process, and that it still plans to publish the results. “It’s a big sigh of relief for the field,” Deborah Temkin, director of education research at Child Trends, told Morning Education.

- **The Civil Rights Data Collection is “a longstanding and necessary” part of the department’s efforts to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance do not discriminate** “on the bases of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age,” the administration wrote. The administration said it “has given significant consideration” to all of the data points the department will collect and decided that “each is necessary to ensure compliance with the civil rights laws and that, individually and in total, the burden is justified by the need for the data.”
- **The department’s call for public comments on the collection efforts drew 1,423 responses**—about 95 times more comments than one preceding the last civil rights data survey, the administration wrote. “I do think there was a real fear that they would stop collecting the data, as well as a fear that they would stop posting the data publicly,” Temkin said. “I think that was clearly reflected in the comments they received.”
- **Among the biggest questions for some civil rights advocates was whether the administration would continue to collect data on harassment and bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and religion.** The administration wrote that it “remains interested in measuring school climate by collecting information on harassment or bullying, including information on reports of harassment or bullying based on a student’s actual or perceived sexual orientation and religion.”
- **But the administration wrote that it won’t expand its collection to note gender identity.** “Under Title IX, schools already must respond to harassment on the basis of a student’s failure to conform to stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity as a form of sex discrimination,” the administration wrote.
- **“There’s still a lot of progress to be made to refine and make this data collection as completely useful as it can be,”** said Eliza Byard, the executive director of the LGBT education advocacy group GLSEN. But, Byard said, “It was a tremendous, tremendous relief to know that this data collection will continue.”
- **The Trump administration said it may even expand the data collection efforts,** writing that it will “explore methods to expand the CRDC universe, to include the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, dependent on funding.”
- Of course, this is all pending approval from the Office of Management and Budget, and therefore subject to change. “OMB still needs to give its final stamp of approval for this, but all signs seem like they’re moving in that direction,” Temkin said.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Nominations are Being Accepted for Advance CTE's 2018 Excellence in Action Award

Do you think you have one of the best Career Technical Education (CTE) programs of study in the nation? Apply for the 2018 [Excellence in Action](#) award to showcase the amazing work of your students, instructors and faculty at the national level. In its 5th year, this award honors programs across the 16 Career Clusters that exemplify excellence in the implementation of the Career Clusters, show a true progression from secondary to postsecondary education, provide meaningful work-based learning opportunities, and have a substantial and evidence-based impact on student achievement and success.

Not only will your program be featured in the media and an awards ceremony in Washington D.C. in the spring, you'll also be contributing to a positive image of CTE programs, and letting policymakers, employers and education leaders know that CTE really is for all students, and prepares them for a lifetime of college and career success. Applications are open to secondary and postsecondary schools/institutions. [Apply today!](#)

EVENTS

Celebrating Student Success at Minority-Serving Community Colleges

Community and technical college presidents, administrators, student support staff, and faculty are invited to participate in the third national convening of minority-serving community colleges at the U.S. Department of Education. The event will take place on November 14 and 15, 2017, in Washington, D.C. and will offer opportunities to exchange promising practices on student success with institutions from across the country; meet representatives from federal agencies and learn about federal programs for minority-serving institutions; hear from and speak with researchers and practitioners; interact with representatives from the U.S. Department of Education; and engage with minority-serving community college communities of practice.

For information on registration, agenda, and other details, please click [here](#) to view the meeting website.

Can't attend? Sign up for the LINCS Community group for MSI Community Colleges and Affiliates to join in the discussions, and view the slides and materials after the event:

<https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/minority-serving-community-colleges-and-affiliates>

Webinar: "Tear Down the Walls to Create Anytime, Anywhere Learning"

Please join Future Ready Schools® (FRS) for a webinar that is part of its [Leadership Hub](#), a one-stop-shop of professional learning opportunities for school leaders.

The [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) defines personalized learning as "a student-centered approach designed to help all students develop a set of skills collectively known as the deeper learning competencies. These skills include thinking critically, using knowledge and information to solve complex problems, working collaboratively, communicating effectively, learning how to learn, and developing academic mindsets."

The implementation of personalized learning requires changes in the way districts and schools utilize instructional time and design learning spaces. In this webinar, panelists will share experiences on how their districts shifted to digital as well as unique approaches to transforming learning into a personalized experience that engages students and improves their outcomes. Panelists will explain how they responded to student needs by rethinking, redesigning, and transitioning learning spaces. They also will address questions submitted by online viewers.

TAKE ACTION

You Can Still Help Push the Senate to Reauthorize Perkins

(Courtesy of ACTE)

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a Perkins reauthorization bill in June (find a summary and analysis online [here](#)). Representatives Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) and Thompson (R-PA), the two main co-sponsors of the House Perkins reauthorization bill, are planning to send a bipartisan “Dear Colleague” letter to the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee leadership encouraging them to take up Perkins reauthorization. They are asking for their colleagues in the House to join them in signing this letter. Now is a great time to [reach out to your Representative](#) to ask them to sign on to this letter.