



NSBA's Priorities for the 114th Congress (Second Session)

On behalf of our nation's state school boards associations and 90,000 local school board members, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) commends the 114th Congress for the historic passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law No: 114-95). NSBA thanks lawmakers and their staff for working with school board members during this reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, to support school districts in their efforts to provide all students with a world-class public education and to reaffirm the importance of local governance. NSBA continues its advocacy before lawmakers during this second legislative session to inform the ongoing national dialogue of advancing equity and excellence in public education to address the following federal priorities.

Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Restoring Local School Board Governance

NSBA's legislative governing body, the Delegate Assembly, informed the development of Title VIII (Part F, Sec. 8541) of the law, which underscores the importance of local governance and community ownership in public education. This provision of ESSA strengthens support for local autonomy in managing school administration, budget development, and related operations for school district responsibilities – all important to continuous improvement for student achievement. NSBA continues its engagement with administrative and legislative officials to ensure that the interests of local school boards are meaningfully considered at every stage of the implementation process.

PRIORITY: NSBA urges Congress to ensure that implementation efforts secure balanced local-state-federal partnerships, maximize the flexibility provisions of the law, and support school districts through technical assistance and compliance resources. NSBA is working with lawmakers to effectively utilize regulatory oversight opportunities, including public hearings, and to provide recommendations for proposed non-regulatory guidance and regulatory provisions.

As the U.S. Department of Education initiates both regulatory and non-regulatory efforts to implement ESSA, NSBA urges Congress to ensure that ESSA is implemented in a manner that: 1) recognizes the law's clear directive to restore local governance and community ownership in public education; and 2) provides an opportunity for local school board members to meaningfully engage in the implementation process and provide input on non-regulatory guidance and proposed regulation.

Child Nutrition Act: Helping Ensure a Healthy Learning Environment for Students

School board members are deeply committed to fostering a healthy and positive learning environment for our students to achieve their full potential; and, child nutrition is a top priority for student health.

PRIORITY: NSBA urges Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to grant flexibility and relief for school districts to successfully administer school meal programs. NSBA supports the Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act (Senate, no bill number) and the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act (H.R. 5003) to reauthorize school meal programs. Both take steps to 1) increase flexibility for school districts, particularly with regard to whole grain content and sodium reduction targets, and 2) meaningfully increase inclusion of the school board perspective in policy and implementation by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. NSBA also calls on Congress to carefully and compassionately consider the impact of community eligibility provisions and new verification requirements for their impact on families and school districts.

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act: Expanding Opportunities for College-and Career-Readiness

Congress has begun efforts to reauthorize the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, exploring options to expand the capacity of programs in school districts throughout the country. Aligning career and technical education programs with workforce demands is critical to preparing students for both college and careers.

PRIORITY: NSBA urges Congress to provide the necessary support to school districts to ensure that all students have access to high-quality career and technical education programs with a strong academic component and credentialing. Our nation's school districts continue efforts to advance curricula and address 21st century skills and knowledge. Aligning career and technical education programs with the needs of employers will help prepare more students for careers in various sectors and provide practical training through apprenticeships and related opportunities.

Federal Education Investments: Fiscal Year 2017 Appropriations

The budget and appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2017 is underway, subsequent to Congress' enactment of the Bipartisan Budget Act to help abate another round of across-the-board budget cuts for FY2017. As members of Congress deliberate FY2017 appropriations, including those for education, priorities to maximize investments in Title I, special education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and related programs are essential.

PRIORITY: NSBA urges Congress to appropriate investments in education that will improve equity in educational opportunity; maximize the federal share of special education aid to help districts and states address the cost of educating children under the requirements of IDEA without displacing resources from other education priorities; and, ensure that the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) are fully funded, as authorized in ESSA.

Education funding should be of the highest federal priority to ensure that our nation's students have the opportunity to meet the challenge of world-class standards and responsible citizenship.

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