

THE Leader


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AFSA, AFL-CIO

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A NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

AFSA Members Awarded for Outstanding Leadership

Every year the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors exemplary school leaders across the nation with the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership. This year, two of the eight principals who received this prestigious award were AFSA members. Ursula Annio, Council of School Supervisors & Administrators (CSA), AFSA Local 1, and Sophie Lee, United Administrators of San Francisco, AFSA Local 3, were honored in November at the U.S. Department of Education ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Principals are nominated for the award by their school communities during the final stages of the National Blue Ribbon Schools application process. Named for the second U.S. secretary of education,

who founded the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, the Terrel H. Bell Award recognizes principals who have “demonstrated their commitment and ability to foster successful teaching and learning at their schools,” according to the National Blue Ribbon School assessment panel. “They are the ones to do ‘whatever it takes’ to help their students meet high standards and realize the transformative and liberating force of education.”

Annio, principal of P.S. 748, the Brooklyn School for Global Scholars, has been leading her school since it opened in 2010. She first designed the school as a choice application school for gifted and talented students, including special needs students. She made the

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Left to right: Ernie Mannino, deputy executive director, National Association of Elementary School Principals; Bob Farrace, director of public affairs, National Association of Secondary School Principals; Ursula Annio, principal, PS 748 and Terrel H. Bell recipient; and Adam Honeysett, managing director of state and local engagement, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education.

D.C. Principals Gain Training Opportunity

In an effort to help school leaders maximize their role in Washington, D.C., communities, the Council of School Officers (CSO), AFSA Local 4, hosted its first professional development and training session for its members on Nov. 8, 2017.

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Report: Michigan's Shortfall in Special Education Funding Costs Schools

Special education in Michigan schools is underfunded by nearly \$700 million annually, according to a recent report by Lt. Gov. Brian Calley's Special Education Task Force. That deficit leaves school districts with less money to educate their general education students as well, the report noted.

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Legislative Update— Congress at Work: Higher Education, Tax Reform and Funding

Despite the gridlock over federal funding, Congress managed to move several pieces of legislation pertaining to education before the holiday break.

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There is a Lot at Stake in This Year's Midterm Elections

By Diann Woodard

This time last year, I feared for our country and what was to come during this presidency. While we all may not agree on politics, I think we all can agree it has been difficult to watch our nation go through so much turmoil in just one year. However, we have the power to shape the future of our country in the 2018 midterm elections.

We need to understand the bigger picture of these elections. This is more than just voting for Democrats or Republicans. Will we vote to elect a Congress that will support and stand up for children, education, health care and workers, or elect a Congress that will continue to hew to a legislative agenda that would harm us and everything we fight for?

If we do not want a repeat of 2017—a year of a divided country, as well as attacks on the middle class, public education, labor and health care—we cannot stand pat.

Now more than ever, we need to be active in our union, recruiting strong candidates, raising the necessary funds to elect them and working to bring each and every eligible voter to the polls. As leaders, we can help educate our communities on the importance of these upcoming elections and the attendant outcomes of our choices.

You have the power to take control, take action and make your voice heard. Attend town hall meetings—get informed and share the issues that need to be heard. Use the power of social media to spread messages advocating for positive change and call

on members of your communities to be active in the upcoming elections. Start or join voter registration drives in your schools and communities. You also easily can contact and send letters to policy makers by participating in our emailed action alerts.

As an AFSA member, you can help provide direct support to political candidates to obtain elected positions to help benefit our students, school leaders and communities by contributing to the AFSA political action committee.* Your contributions go a long way in supporting candidates who pledge to fight for public education and organized labor.

There is too much at stake in the upcoming elections. We cannot allow ourselves to just sit back during this critical time. There are threats of cuts to education, welfare, food stamps, Medicare and Social Security. Our country faces an abundance of issues relating to immigration, social justice and domestic policy.

As educators, the future of public education is most concerning. We cannot support policy makers who have enacted a tax reform measure that will have severe effects on K–12 and higher education. Our country needs policy makers who will fight to keep our public schools from being defunded by the expansion of private and charter schools. Our schools need officials who will ensure access and equity for all.

The upcoming elections could change everything. Only 24 seats are needed to flip the House and two are needed to take the Senate. Three times since 1994,



AFSA President Diann Woodard

the president's party has lost its majority in a midterm election, most recently in 2010. There is a great probability of that happening this year—but each of us must be agents of change.

We have seen firsthand the power of the people to affect the necessary change. When there was early doubt about nominees Phil Murphy in New Jersey and Ralph Northam in Virginia, their supporters dug down and each prevailed in their respective general elections. Doug Jones' extraordinary U.S. Senate victory in the red state of Alabama demonstrates our ability, when we work together unceasingly, to change the complexion of Congress.

I am proud of the diverse victories this past year. In Virginia we saw Hala Ayala and Elizabeth Guzman become Virginia's first Latina state legislators. In addition, Danica Roem is the nation's first openly transgender state legislator. These victories show our nation is striving for unity and accepting of change. AFSA will continue to fight for and stand with legislation that protects the future of our education and labor communities. Join us in this important election year by continuing to make calls, sending letters, participating in events—and show up on Election Day! This is our opportunity to make a difference for years to come. ■

** AFSA members can contribute to the national PAC by sending a personal check made out to "AFSA PAC" to 1101 17th St., NW, Suite 408, Washington, DC 20036. Your canceled check will serve as your receipt.*

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D.C. Principals Gain Training Opportunity

In an effort to help school leaders maximize their role in Washington, D.C., communities, the Council of School Officers (CSO), AFSA Local 4, hosted its first professional development and training session for its members on Nov. 8, 2017.

New CSO President Richard A. Jackson wants to focus on the vision of "growing a rich and viable organization that meets the diverse needs of the students and managers of the District of Columbia Public Schools." In meeting these needs, Jackson understands CSO must provide such trainings to ensure its members are armed with the proper tools.

Dr. Edna Olive, creator of Positive Behavior Facilitation, helped CSO members learn an approach that shares self-management with students. PBF offers guideposts to continue the positive reinforcement that students and practitioners alike require in order to thrive in educational settings.

PBF challenges traditional models of discipline and control by providing educators new strategies necessary to understand and intervene in behavior.

The six PBF tools are: Awareness and Management of Self, Knowledge of the Dynamics of Conflict, Understanding the Differences between Behavior Management and Behavior Change, Healing Environment, Surface Behavior Management Techniques and Effective Communication.

Educators learned strategies to succeed with students of different personality types. Olive identified strategies for reducing conflict and increasing child and adult capacity to cope with stress. Participants examined how they interact with students and how to have effective interventions to facilitate permanent behavior change. Olive also emphasized for the educators the difference between managing behavior and changing behavior.

According to several CSO surveys, members want more training to strengthen their ability to serve students and adults within their individual settings. Further, their post-training evaluations revealed that members considered it beneficial and appreciated the opportunity to participate.

"Our goal is to continue to render trainings that our CSO members desire and require," said Jackson. ■



Dr. Edna Olive introduces the PBF model to CSO members during the professional development training session.



New Jersey School Breakfast Program: Overall Participation Down, Though Some Urban Districts Have Seen Increase

Recently the Advocates for Children of New Jersey undertook a study that looked at New Jersey student participation in the student free and reduced-price breakfast program, comparing 2016 with 2017. The study revealed that for the first time in the six years the report has been compiled in the state of New Jersey, there was a 2 percent decrease in the number of public school students who participated in the program.

The report states there was a decline in breakfasts served in 13 of the state's 20 largest high-poverty school districts, with the average participation dropping from 61 percent to 58 percent of low-income students, a decrease of about 6,300 children.

The reason for the 2 percent decline is that schools are reducing their services. Many schools now only are serving breakfast before the first bell rings, says the ACNJ report. It also states that changes in district leadership and challenges in serving breakfast in high school may be causing the decrease.

Yet, the report also revealed that six public schools districts in New Jersey had increased student participation. Specifically, schools in the large urban district of Newark had a 2 percent increase in the number of students who participated in the school breakfast program.

AFSA Secretary-Treasurer and City Association of Supervisors and Administrators (CASA), AFSA Local 20 Executive Director Dr. Leonard Pugliese says the increase in Newark is understandable in light of the emphasis that the district has placed on increasing student participation in the breakfast program. "Newark has consistently raised student participation in the free and reduced-price school breakfast program over the years," he said. "However, this increase did not happen by chance. Newark School Business Administrator Valerie Wilson, who oversees the student breakfast program in Newark has, in conjugation with principals and vice principals at the school site level, emphasized two major approaches designed to increase student breakfast participation. These two approaches consisted of an increased emphasis

on student participation at the high school level and an expansion of the program throughout the district that permits students to eat breakfast in the classroom."

According to Wilson, the benefit of student participation in the breakfast program goes beyond the obvious nutritional benefit. There is evidence to demonstrate that there is an educational benefit also. Those schools that have increased student participation in the breakfast program have seen a corresponding increase in student academic achievement. Children who are fed a nutritious breakfast perform better academically.

"It is quite evident that the free and reduced-price breakfast program is highly beneficial," Pugliese said. "It is also quite evident that school districts across the state, indeed across the country, should look at best practices and implement procedures designed to increase student participation in the free and reduced-price breakfast program."

View the entire report here: <https://acnj.org/food-for-thought-7th-annual-school-breakfast-2017/>. ■

School Leaders Advocate for Professional Development Funding

AFSA, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals co-sponsored an event on Capitol Hill to support and discuss the importance of fully funding Title II, Part A under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The briefing, “Do State ESSA Plans Address Leadership? Reflections on Innovative Support for School Principals and Other Leaders,” was part of a series of events in honor of National Principals Month in October.

Association of Washington School Principals Executive Director Gary Kipp, Arthur Middleton Elementary School (Maryland) Principal Louis D'Ambrosio, Bluffton High School (Indiana) Principal Steve Baker and Calverton Elementary School (Maryland) Principal Monique Lamar (member of Association of Supervisory and Administrative School Personnel, AFSA, Local 109) discussed in panel format the effects of ESSA and how professional development can improve all aspects of school life. The discussion was moderated by Oxon Hill (Maryland) High School Principal Jean-Paul Cadet (also a member of ASASP, AFSA Local 109). Doris Reed, ASASP's executive director, also attended and presented opening remarks.



Left to right: Monique Lamar, Jean-Paul Cadet and Doris Reed

Reed discussed how important principals are to the success of schools and their need for support. She explained Maryland's ESSA plan to support school leaders, which will require the state to develop a strategy for professional learning for principals and all educational leaders, and provide and support targeted learning opportunities in order to prepare them for implementing evidence-based instructional strategies aligned to student needs.

“Principals deserve to have a say in their professional development planning and how education is delivered in their schools,” said Reed. “They are the ones on the ground. They know what their schools need and what works and what doesn't work.”

Panelists described the potential impact of the loss of Title II, Part A funding. “The loss of Title II funds will directly impact all school leaders, but most concerning to me is that students will not benefit from [the loss of] these professional development opportunities. In order for them to continue to receive an exceptional education, I believe these funds are crucial,” D'Ambrosio said. Panelists noted funding has allowed them to gain new skills and improve their role. New principals, especially, would lose out on the opportunity to receive professional development.

Throughout the discussion, the panelists talked about their personal experiences and how the role of a principal has evolved, furthering the



The panel of school leaders discusses the importance principal funding. Left to right: Jean-Paul Cadet, Gary Kipp, Steve Baker, Monique Lamar and Louis D'Ambrosio.

need for professional development. “Someone who is a human resources manager, a grants manager, someone who can advocate for children and adults, someone who knows instruction, someone who can guide and champion a vision. Someone who can do that in one day plus care for all of the students, teachers and community that they serve—that is a principal,” said Lamar, when asked what she would like lawmakers to know about principals.

The panelists discussed how only a single-digit percentage of principals' time goes toward professional development. They spoke on how more professional development would allow teachers and principals to learn while on the job.

The impact of professional development for educators in underserved populations also was discussed. Panelists said professional development is necessary to lead teachers who deal with all types of students. “Teachers that come from a middle-class perspective need professional development to meet the needs of children who are impoverished,” Lamar said.

During the Q&A portion, a question was brought up on the topic of technology in schools. Panelists discussed the prevalence of technology in everyday life, and said it was up to educators to teach students how to use technology responsibly and for their benefit. ■

AFSA MEMBERS AWARDED FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

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Principal Sophie Lee proudly displays her award at the ceremony in Washington, D.C.

New York school's focus on promoting global citizenship and developing the whole child. Annio made sure to hire staff and teachers who were interested in a collaborative working environment and uniquely suited to the school's focus. Together they developed a school curriculum rooted in rigorous state learning standards and a project-based learning model.

In 2012, due to overcrowding, her school was forced to transform from a choice application school for gifted and talented students to a zoned school, with a higher-needs and diverse student population. She demonstrated her role as an innovator, working with staff to adjust the curriculum and instructional methods to meet the

needs of the school's new students. She was able to successfully lead her school through a period of revision and create a supportive learning environment.

Annio has developed many innovative approaches during her time at P.S. 748. She set up ongoing and meaningful professional development opportunities to meet the needs of individual staff members. Also, she and her team departmentalized grades 3–5 after a careful study of the Common Core learning standards, allowing teachers to deepen their instructional practice and strengthen student learning. She created more engagement in the school community by setting up parent academies to help family members understand the curriculum and encourage learning at home, and she hosts family events to celebrate the school's diversity.

Lee has been the principal at Sunset Elementary School since 2002. She has transformed her school into a high-performing, tech-savvy, multicultural, inclusive community. Lee introduced the Caring School Community program, which focuses on community cohesion while honoring student autonomy. This mentor system strengthens relationships between grades by having classes of different grades work on projects together, attend performances and go on field trips with one other.

Lee makes sure to build relationships with her students. Each week, a Star Student from every class who demonstrates the school's core values of being respectful, responsible, caring, fair, safe and helpful gets to have lunch with the principal.

Together, Lee and a parent-teacher committee developed an instructional technology road map to ensure all students learn technology skills. The school acquired equipment for a technology lab and 1:1 devices for all students. Digital technology has transformed the school's teaching and learning in classes.

Lee thinks the arts enrich the lives of students. She revised the technology consultant position to a STEAM consultant in an effort to strengthen arts education. She attended a national administrators for the arts program that included visits to museums, classes at dance studios and print workshops. All students at Sunset Elementary attend classes in drama, visual arts, choral and instrumental music, and contemporary dance.

AFSA is proud of the special recognition these two school leaders have earned for their dedication to their communities. We hope they inspire principals everywhere to keep having a positive impact in public education. ■



ATTENTION AFSA MEMBERS

AFSA Scholarship applications are due **Feb. 28, 2018**.
For details, visit AFSAadmin.org.

Report: Michigan's Shortfall in Special Education Funding Costs Schools

Special education in Michigan schools is underfunded by nearly \$700 million annually, according to a recent report by Lt. Gov. Brian Calley's Special Education Task Force. That deficit leaves school districts with less money to educate their general education students as well, the report noted.

The special education task force, made up of school district administrators, advocates, professors and lawmakers, was asked to recommend improvements to special education funding systems and programs in the state.

The government identifies Michigan as one of the 23 states that "needs assistance" because it doesn't meet the requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for students ages 3 through 21.

The new study states, "Educational outcomes for Michigan children with disabilities are lagging behind those of other states. Not only are students with disabilities behind, they are not catching up; students with disabilities are more than 20 percent more likely to have below-average academic growth in English/Language Arts and math."

Other findings in the state report include:

- 55% of students with disabilities graduate within four years, compared with 80% of all students in Michigan; and
- Special education students have a lower chance of getting into college due to lower SAT scores than their peers without disabilities—some 200 points lower, on average.

"Special education funding experienced a 15.6 percent reduction, from \$238 million in 2011–12 to \$201 million in 2015–16," states the report. Since special education services must be funded whether or not there is sufficient state or federal funding to cover the costs, schools shifted nearly \$700 million from their general operating budgets in the 2015–16 academic year to spend nearly \$3.1 billion on special education. This means school districts spent \$459 less per student to cover the shortfall from federal, state and local sources of revenue. "However, state and federal funding do not cover most of those additional costs," says the report.

The task force notes research indicating that intervening in the first 1,000 days of a child's life makes a lasting impact on brain development and helps children with disabilities. The report recommends that Michigan invest in an early intervention program, Early On, to help "close the developmental gap earlier and mitigate the need for future special education services," says the report. The report goes on: "Adequate investment in Michigan's infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities could result in significant savings for the State of Michigan each year."

Another recommendation is that Michigan should provide financial incentives for pre-kindergarten and K–12 schools to implement best practices in special education services. "The subcommittee believes that schools implementing best practices within special education should be rewarded," says the report. "Funding could support increased staffing and resources for classrooms that promote inclusion of special education students within general education classrooms."

The study calls for an increase of support for professional development to prepare new teachers to teach and meet the academic, behavioral and social/emotional needs of all students. The task force emphasized the importance of increasing certification requirements and improving training for teachers. "Our teacher preparation needs to encompass higher standards for admission, should require a year-long residency and require evidence of skills in their subject matter, social-emotional intelligence and pedagogy," states the report.

The report also discusses equity in special education funding within the state. "A student with a disability in Michigan's Upper Peninsula may not get the same funding as a student in the Lower Peninsula, due to the varying level of mileage and taxable values," states the report. The task force recommends that the state provide equity for all students with disabilities regardless of their zip codes.

The report acknowledges that the state has a long way to go in improving outcomes for all students. "The subcommittee realizes that a \$692 million shortfall in the special education finance system cannot be remedied immediately, but is confident that small steps can be taken today to ensure a brighter tomorrow for all students and families in Michigan."



The entire report is available at: www.michigan.gov/documents/calley/Special_Education_Finance_Report_-_final_2017_606751_7.pdf. ■

Meet Richard Jackson:

Newly Elected President of CSO, AFSA Local 4



Richard Jackson, president of Council of School Officers (CSO), AFSA Local 4, has been very busy leading his local in Washington, D.C., since his May election. With many years of experience as an educator and administrator, he is optimistic about the growth opportunities of this new leadership position.

Jackson taught music and social studies for 14 years before spending the next 20 years as a school administrator at the middle and high school levels in Washington, D.C., and Maryland. He also held a position as an educational consultant, in which he provided professional advice and guidance to education professionals. He had planned to retire from his position as Calvin Coolidge High School principal at the end of the 2016–17 school year. However, he was inspired to run for president of the local with the

encouragement and support of a number of CSO members.

Despite the short transition time from retiring in June to starting his role at CSO in July, Jackson says he's "enjoyed the job since I've started."

He says his main goal for CSO is to expand membership engagement. He plans to do so by creating long-term stability via the negotiation of a new contract, improving working conditions for all members, and

developing each member through professional development and training.

"We have a lot of new young principals and staff who haven't had extensive formalized training, so as a union we are looking to provide them with internal and external professional development opportunities," says Jackson. "Because our membership is so diverse, the needs have to be differentiated based on all the different roles of our members, but they all need continuing education and training. Therefore, that's our biggest focus—in the hope of retaining our members. We have a current retention level of less than three years in our district."

After hosting CSO's first professional development training in November, he already has three more scheduled this year. The trainings include a roundtable

of successful principals, school safety training and making ethical decisions in the current test improvement culture.

One of the biggest challenges Local 4 faces is changing over from one-year contracts to three-year contracts for all members in the district. Over the last eight years, there has been a turnover of more than 300 administrators.

"We're seeing a ridiculous amount of turnover because of the one-year contracts," Jackson says. "It's better to invest in your people long term than to continue this ridding of administrators, which does not create loyalty to the system."

Jackson also is working on improving CSO's communications tools via a variety of social media platforms, monthly newsletters and weekly text message updates.

The most important part of being in a union is "it gives the worker an opportunity to be heard, and as the leader of Local 4, it provides me an opportunity to advocate for our children," he says. "To be at the forefront of educational improvement is what's most important to me." ■

Support Workers— Buy Union-Made Products

The Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO was founded to promote the products and services produced in America by union members. When you see a union label—on a product, a union shop or union store placard in a place of business, or on a union button worn by a worker—it signifies quality goods and services.

When a labor dispute with an employer cannot be resolved, the AFL-CIO Executive Council is asked to endorse an affiliated union's boycott, which is a request for support of the endorsed action—don't use certain businesses' services, don't buy certain goods, etc.

For example, the well-known company Nabisco/Mondelēz has been under fire in recent years over the relocation of many of the company's production facilities to Mexico—one such movement put approximately 600 middle-class working people out of a job in the heavily African American and Hispanic community in southwestern Chicago.

The company's products that are made in Mexico are included on the AFL-CIO's "Don't Buy" list. To ensure your family only purchases snacks still made in the United States, check the label on the back of every Nabisco package (near the expiration date and UPC code) before you purchase.

The Union Label and Service Trades Department also features a "Do Buy" that, along with the "Don't Buy" list, is published regularly on its website.

When you buy union-made products, you support American manufacturers and workers.

For more information on what products to buy and what not to buy, visit <http://wp.unionlabel.org>. ■



Offer Positive Guidance About Social Media to Grieving Students

Social media is a simple fact of student life today. The vast majority of teens spend time on social media sites, and many younger students do as well. Grieving students frequently communicate with peers through texting and social media. There are good reasons for this:

- *It's familiar.* Young people communicate in these ways about all kinds of life events, including some that are quite serious. They're used to it.
- *It's simpler.* A student can communicate broadly and immediately with a large group of friends and acquaintances. There's no need to contact everyone individually and go through the pain of telling the story over and over again.
- *It offers control.* Grieving students can decide when to read and respond to someone's post or text. They can compose themselves, think things through and respond when they're ready.

Educators: Offer Support and Guidance

Grieving children also need face-to-face time with supportive peers and adults. Social media interactions will be most helpful when they are balanced with real-world contacts.

Education professionals are one of the most important face-to-face contacts for grieving students. When talking with students, look for opportunities to ask specifically about the kind of support they're getting (or not getting) through texting or social media.

Begin by expressing your condolences and checking in generally on how they're doing. As the conversation continues, or in a subsequent conversation, you might ask questions such as these:

- Have you posted about your loss on Facebook? How did that go?

- What have you heard from your friends? Are they texting you or posting on your Facebook page?
- Sometimes, people who go through an experience like the death of a family member see things on social media that help them cope with their sad feelings. Sometimes they see things that are hurtful or troublesome. I'm wondering what sorts of things you've been seeing?

If students are experiencing troublesome posts or harassment, help them problem solve. You may want to link them with technical support to block negative posts. In some situations, counseling support for the student or disciplinary action against offenders may be called for.

You can find additional guidance at the Coalition to Support Grieving Students (www.grievingstudents.org), of which AFSA is a member. ■



Congress at Work

Higher Education, Tax Reform and Funding

House Moves Higher Education Act Reauthorization

Despite the gridlock over federal funding, Congress managed to move several pieces of legislation pertaining to education before the holiday break. On Dec. 12, just two weeks after House Education and the Workforce Committee Chair Virginia Fox (R-N.C.) and subcommittee Chair Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.) introduced their version of Higher Education Act reauthorization legislation (titled the PROSPER Act), the bill was marked up and passed out of committee on a party-line vote of 23–17.

The bill would make sweeping changes to current law, including eliminating all of the teacher preparation programs under Title II and consolidating several grant and loan programs into one program for each category of borrower. It also effectively would eliminate the loan forgiveness for teachers program and the public interest loan forgiveness program, which many American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA) members are eligible for. AFSA opposes the elimination of these programs and provisions, and is working to ensure the final higher education bill retains provisions that prioritize the adequate preparation of our nation's school leaders.

Additionally, the bill would repeal gainful employment rules and prohibit the secretary from promulgating any new rules on this issue. Democratic members of the committee decried the partisan nature of the bill and the short timeframe for members and stakeholders to adequately assess its impact, with Ranking Member Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) calling the bill part of the GOP's "war against students" and asserting that it would raise costs for college, limit accessibility and weaken protections for borrowers. During the markup,

Democrats unsuccessfully offered several amendments, including efforts to restore educator preparation programs for pre-service teachers and an amendment (which failed 20–19) that would restore the public service loan forgiveness program.

Tax Overhaul Enacted; Major Implications for Educators

Just in time to land on President Trump's desk before Christmas for signature into law, Congress passed a sweeping tax reform measure that already has taken effect and has significant implications for K–12 and higher education. The new tax law consolidates alternative higher education tax credits, including the Hope Scholarship Credit and Lifetime Learning Credit, into a single existing option—the American Opportunity Tax Credit. Additionally, the tax law eliminates several Coverdell education savings accounts, which allowed lower-income people to shelter from taxes money for elementary, secondary and college education expenses, forcing those using Coverdell accounts to roll their money into 529 accounts. The law expands these 529 accounts—which allow all individuals to shelter interest on up to \$10,000 annually for college expenses—for public or private schools. This new provision essentially expands school choice options by allowing parents to use tax-sheltered funds for private schools. AFSA opposes these provisions, as we oppose any legislation that expands school choice at the expense of funding for public schools.

Aside from college savings plan changes, the law also impacts higher education by levying a new tax on the endowments of certain private colleges and universities. However, the final law protects graduate students from new taxes on the tuition waivers they receive for their work and does not repeal the student loan interest deduction—two

things that draft tax legislation contemplated. For K–12, teachers retained the right to deduct up to \$250 for classroom expenses, something the initial House version had sought to eliminate. While that represented good news in the education world, many remained troubled by the tax overhaul's compromise to limit state and local tax deductions, including property taxes, to \$10,000. Critics warn that higher-tax states and municipalities will find it harder to increase taxes for the benefit of schools if residents are unable to deduct the full amount of those taxes from their federal income taxes.

FY18 Spending Still Up in the Air

Unfortunately, the future of the Title II-A program remains threatened as long as the fiscal year 2018 budget is not finalized. The fate of Title II-A, which provides critical funding to states and districts for the purposes of preparing, training, recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, principals, assistant principals and other school leaders, all depends on whether the federal spending caps are raised. Without a deal to increase the caps that limit overall federal spending to sequester levels, it is not likely Title II-A will be safe from cuts. Currently funded at \$2.05 billion, the president and the House called for elimination of the program in FY18, while the Senate called for flat funding. AFSA, along with the other major principals' and education groups, sent a letter to House and Senate leadership calling for them to raise the caps and increase investments for Title II-A. If a deal is reached to raise the caps, it would take appropriators about a month to determine final Title II-A allocations and move a final bill. As always, we encourage our AFSA members to take action by participating in our action alerts sent through email, tweeting and calling your members of Congress in support of the Title II-A program. ■



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AFSA 15TH TRIENNIAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Exploring the Changing Landscape of Public Education

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July 26–29, 2018

National Harbor

Minutes from Downtown Washington, D.C.

- Learn innovative educational strategies
- Fight for social justice for all students
- Get insights on political and legislative activism
- Overcome challenges facing the labor movement
- Understand retiree opportunities and resources

The convention and professional development sessions are open to all AFSA members as nonvoting guests.

Delegate selection will be coordinated by each local in accordance with the AFSA Constitution. Delegates will adopt policy resolutions and positions on key education and societal issues, debate amendments to the AFSA Constitution, and elect officers and general vice presidents to help govern the future of AFSA.

Shape your future....Get active in your union....
Make a difference in your community.

For registration information, please visit
www.AFSAadmin.org/2018convention.