



## September Federal Policy Update

**Congress Considers Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Bills:** The annual appropriations cycle is moving full steam ahead and could have an impact on how summer programs are funded! As a reminder, each year Congress is supposed to pass 12 appropriations bills that fund the federal government for the following fiscal year which runs October 1 - September 30. That means that identical appropriations bills must pass both the House and Senate and be signed into law by the president by the start of the fiscal year to ensure funding continues. While possible, it is unlikely that these differences (described below) will be settled in time for the end of the fiscal year on September 30th. Instead, leaders of the House and Senate will attempt to come together to pass a continuing resolution - essentially a bill that will keep the government open on autopilot - to give Congress time to come to a funding agreement. This means that the debate over government funding, particularly for essential education programs and those programs that support summer learning, will continue throughout the fall.

Before the August recess, the Senate appropriations committee passed its own version of the bill that funds the Department of Education, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and AmeriCorps (this bill is often referred to as the LHHS-Ed Appropriations bill as it also funds the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services). All of these programs have an impact on summer learning opportunities. Last week, the House appropriations committee unveiled its own version of the LHHS-ED bill. Unfortunately the two bills look drastically different.

The Senate Bill would largely provide the same amount of funding as included in the current fiscal year spending programs for most education programs. Many have characterized this bipartisan bill as the Senate's rejections of the President's proposed cuts. The Senate bill includes:

- Continued funding for the Department of Education at the same overall level as in the current fiscal year, including for 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
- Continued funding for AmeriCorps at the same level as the current fiscal year.
- Cut funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services by \$3 million.

Overall the House bill would make sweeping and drastic cuts, which has been characterized by some as a statement of approval of the President's proposed cuts to domestic programs. Amongst many cuts, the House Bill would:

- Cut funding for the Department of Education by 15% overall. This includes drastic cuts to Title I, staffing at the Department, and the elimination of several critical programs such as teacher training programs and Full Service Community Schools.
- Cut funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services by \$3 million.
- Cuts AmeriCorps and related grants by nearly 50% and renames AmeriCorps as “America First Corps”
- The bill provides level funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) program and differs from the President’s proposed budget by keeping it its own separate program as opposed to folding into a new “flexible spending block grant.”

It is important to remember Congress sets spending levels for these programs, but the executive branch disburses the funds. As we’ve seen, the current Administration has often frozen entire programs, withheld billions in funds, and canceled grant contracts for programs that were previously appropriated by Congress. Notably, the Administration attempted to cancel many AmeriCorps programs and refused to disburse critical 21CCLC funds in the spring and summer. This is despite both programs receiving funding in last year’s Congressional appropriations bills and signed into law by the President himself. NSLA will continue our advocacy to ensure these programs receive robust funding as well as be implemented in accordance with the law.

Your advocacy is also critical. Please continue to share your stories about the importance of federal support for summer learning opportunities, and let Congress and the Administration know that these programs must continue to receive federal funding!