Federal Funding: Budget & Appropriations

When it comes to the federal fiscal year, we are currently in FY15, which runs from October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015. FY15 dollars will be in your schools for the 2015-16 school year. When you go to the hill, you will be talking about FY16 appropriations, which will take effect this coming October.

Sequestration: The across the board cuts came in FY13 and a large share were restored in FY14, though USED funding remains below pre-sequester levels. There will not be across the board cuts this year (FY16), but the conversation of sequester remains relevant. AESA remains opposed to sequester and encourages Congress to pick up the work of the failed super committee and replace the cuts of sequester with a blend of limited spending cuts, mandatory program reform and revenue increases. The cuts of sequester applied only to the discretionary portion of the budget and are split evenly between defense and non-defense discretionary dollars. AESA absolutely prioritizes parity between defense and non-defense discretionary funds within sequester. Education funding is in the non-defense discretionary pot of funding. There is a concerted effort to exempt defense discretionary dollars from sequester; any such action will deepen the cuts to the non-defense discretionary portion of the budget, including education.

FY16 Appropriations: Both the House and Senate are advancing through the budget/appropriations process faster and farther than in recent years. We commend this return to the process, as it provides—for the first time since 2009—LHHS funding proposals from both chambers that demonstrate respective priorities and cuts. As advocates, the lack of program-specific funding levels made it difficult to advocate effectively for programmatic levels, as the appropriations committees had not publicly released their proposals. While we applaud the process this year, we have NO support for either the House and the Senate proposals. The fundamental problem with both bills is that they are based on the sequester-level caps, which essentially freeze funding for non-defense discretionary programs (including education). AESA strongly believes that the only way to provide critical education funding is for Congress to replace the sequester.

- House FY16 LHHS Bill: Cuts discretionary funding for USED by $2.77 billion (4.1%). This exceeds the depth of sequester cuts and brings the discretionary funding level to pre-2011 levels. It eliminates 27 programs, freezes funding for 40, and cuts funding for 10. It increases funding for 26, including IDEA, Impact Aid, Head Start and charter schools.
- Senate FY16 LHHS Bill: Cuts discretionary funding for USED by $1.36 billion, to pre-2011 levels. The bill eliminates 16 programs, freezes funding for 27 programs, and cuts funding for 48. It increases funding for 11, including Title I and IDEA (by 'budget dust' amount), though these increases are rendered meaningless in the context of the broader funding proposal.

Talking Points:
- Thank your Congressional delegation for restoring most of the cuts of sequestration in FY14, but don't let them off the hook: education was disproportionately restored, and key federal K12 programs have yet to reach pre-sequester levels.
- Education programs must be restored to pre-sequester levels, especially Title I and IDEA.
- Rural education needs a funding increase. It is inequitable to ask rural schools to meet 2015 needs using 2004 funding levels, and rural schools feel cuts in federal funding more severely, as federal dollars represent a larger share of the operating budgets. Fund REAP!
- Urge your Senators and Representatives to OPPOSE their chamber's respective FY16 LHHS appropriations bill.
- Urge your Senators and Representative to support increased investment to Congress' outstanding commitments to underserved populations through Title I and IDEA.
- Urge your Senators and Representatives to support efforts to replace sequester, and to ensure parity between defense and non-defense discretionary dollars.