



2018 Annual Federal Legislative Agenda

Introduction:

AESA represents its members on federal legislative issues. To do so, it operates with Legislative Policy Priorities and an Annual Federal Legislative Agenda. The Federal Legislative Policy Priorities are subject to regular review by the federal advocacy committee and approved by the Executive Council. The Annual Federal Legislative Agenda allows the organization to identify, pivot, and respond to emerging federal discussions especially those that affect ESAs and AESA's Federal Legislative Policy Priorities. The Annual Federal Legislative Agenda is recommended by the Federal Advocacy Committee to the Executive Council for approval each calendar year.

IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities with Education Act

IDEA defines the role of the federal government in K12 special education. It was designed to level the playing field for a historically disadvantaged population, students with disabilities, to ensure they have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities. Advocacy around IDEA will relate to both the authorization of the underlying statute and the annual appropriations process.

- Congress must meet its commitment to provide 40% of the additional cost associated with educating students with disabilities. AESA supports full funding of IDEA in both the short-term (through annual appropriations) and in the long-term (through stand-alone legislation providing a path to meet the 40% commitment). AESA supports a long-term coordinated campaign to fully fund federal IDEA legislation.
- Protecting Medicaid in schools is critical. As part of their work in implementing IDEA, ESAs and the schools they serve, may provide Medicaid eligible services and, as such, remain eligible to receive reimbursement.

Educator Shortages

ESAs and the schools they serve are constantly working to ensure they have effective employees. We are currently facing a nation-wide educator shortage. AESA remains committed to the broader systemic conversation about educator shortages. AESA supports screening the types of candidates that pursue education and the way education programs are positioned and treated in the higher education environment. AESA also supports a review of educator retention patterns and pathways, both alternative and traditional.

- Allow all prep/licensure candidates to be eligible for student loans including alternative licensure programs.
- ESAs should be allowed to serve as educator licensing entities.

- Preserve student aid (grants and loan) programs aimed at future educators.
- Ensure that in any HEA reauthorization:
 - ESAs are eligible for grants
 - ESAs coordinate collaboration with Pk-16
- Protect Public service loan forgiveness programs for all educators.
- Incentivize salaries for educators in rural areas.
- AESA endorses a full resolution to the educational impacts of federal immigration law, including mitigating any impact on school site safety, safety for students (en-route or in school) and its impact on educator shortages.

Early Childhood Education

Just as ESAs and the schools they serve must be ready for the students they enroll, so too must the students be ready (academically, emotionally, and socially) to learn.

- Protect funding for Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
- Provide access to robust early education (birth to age five), particularly for students in high-need/low-income situations. It is a critical component to building a strong education continuum.

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act

ESSA establishes a role for the federal government in K12 education. Designed to level the playing field for a historically disadvantaged population, students in poverty, ESSA was signed into law in 2015. It represents a significant return to the empowerment of state and local education agencies and education professionals as it relates to education, program design and implementation, and students.

- Ensuring ESAs continue to work with states to maximize flexibility in ESSA implementation
- Defined role for ESAs within ESSA and state plans include and enlist ESAs
- Opposition of new voucher program

Secure Rural Schools

Secure Rural Schools provides funding for ESAs, schools, and communities that find a portion of their land owned by federal parkland. The presence of federal land means the community has reduced ability to generate property taxes (a common source of funding for schools). SRS helps fill some of the void.

- Long-term dedicated funding for 5-10 years
- Short-term retroactive plus at least one year of future funding appropriated. Reduced payments over time if sustained funding is not approved “last resort”

Career and Technical Education

ESAs work to ensure all students graduate college and career ready. CTE is the backbone of ESAs' ability to prepare students for career or additional career-specific training in the K12 setting.

- Provide funding for career pathways for all students.
- Increase opportunities consistent with expansion of dual enrollment.
- Ensure equity of CTE opportunities by supporting rural and Urban Community College partnerships (Iowa example).
- Continue to allow ESAs to regionalize CTE to ensure opportunities for all kids, it is important for the federal government to continue to support consortiums.
 - Fiduciary
 - Professional development
 - Stackable credentials
- Require collaboration as ESAs are the link between K12 and Community Colleges.

Appropriations

Public education represents one of our nation's earliest forms of public infrastructure, and requires continued support and investment from the federal level. Public education works to ensure that our nation's students are prepared to be engaged community members.

- Oppose competitive allocations, including vouchers and tax credits.
- Support prioritization of investment in federal flagship programs targeted via equity and opportunity, including ESSA Title I and IDEA.
- Oppose efforts to privatize federal investment in education.
- Support increased investments to programs that support educator development and training (including ESSA Title II) and mental health supports, education technology, and well-rounded education (including IDEA and ESSA Title IV).

FCC/Education Technology

Education technology, including connectivity, equipment and professional development for educators, is a critical component to AESA's support of educational equity and opportunity. The E-Rate program single-handedly transformed the role of technology in classrooms and libraries across the country by supporting the expansion of internet connectivity. The Lifeline program, as modernized in 2014, represents an opportunity for beneficiaries to access the Internet at home; thereby, helping to address and eliminate the homework gap. There is an ever-growing demand for connectivity and bandwidth. E-Rate and Lifeline remain critical components of federal support for ESAs, schools, and libraries, and the students they serve.

- Protect and expand funding, including continued opposition to any efforts to institute a funding cap or per pupil allocation for E-Rate.
- Support FCC/USAC appointees who support E-Rate.
- Expand the scope of services from infrastructure to classroom.
- Protect the ability of schools, libraries and ESAs to continue to provide affordable, equitable access to broadband and content to students and ensure that federal policy allows 24-hour learners to have 24-hour access.