

September 15, 2017

TRUMP ENDS DREAMERS PROGRAM, GIVES CONGRESS CHANCE TO SAVE IT

President Donald Trump announced on September 5th that his administration will end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama-era program that offers some protection to over 800,000 (with 224,000 in California) young, undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children. However, he will give lawmakers six months to act first, placing the fate of Dreamers into the hands of Congress. Several options for resolving this issue have emerged since the announcement and at this time it is unclear which way Congress and the President will go; although, recent reports coming out of D.C. indicate a tentative agreement between the president and congressional leaders to secure a permanent solution for DACA students.

PRESIDENT SIGNS “FOREVER G.I. BILL”

On August 16th, President Trump signed HR 3218, which expands educational benefits to veterans. Among its provisions, the bill would remove, for new enlistees, the 15-year time limit on when recipients must use their GI Bill benefits; restore some GI Bill benefits to veterans when their school closes in the middle of a semester, creating parity with students who received loans through the Department of Education; eliminate the 40-percent benefit level and expand the 60-percent benefit level under the Post 9/11 GI Bill program. Purple Heart Recipients on or after September 11, 2001 will be entitled to Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at the 100-percent benefit level for up to 36 months. The bill also provides up to nine months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to eligible individuals who have exhausted their benefits and are pursuing STEM degrees, and improves outreach and transparency to Veterans and Service members by providing information on whether institutions of higher learning administer a priority enrollment system that allows certain student Veterans to enroll in courses earlier than other students.

CONGRESS FACING LOOMING BUDGET STRUGGLE

On September 8th, President Trump signed HR 601 into law. This bill temporarily suspends the statutory debt limit and provides short term funding for the federal government through December 8, 2017. It also provides funds for aid to victims of Hurricane Harvey. The legislation is the result of a deal reached between the President, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. This sets the stage for another deal to be made in December to prevent a shutdown for the federal government.

Congress is also working on the budget for fiscal year 2017-18. On the House side, education funding legislation (H.R. 3358) has already cleared the appropriations committee. Senate subcommittees have marked up their own funding bills (S.1771 is the education funding bill) and they await a vote on the Senate floor. Overall, both houses are largely in agreement with rejecting many of the cuts proposed by the Trump Administration.

Comparison Chart of House and Senate FY 2018 L-HHS-ED Appropriations Spending Levels
As of 9.8.17

Program	Senate	House
Pell Grants	\$22.5 billion in FY 2018, the same as FY 2017. 1.7 percent increase to the maximum Pell Grant in 2018-2019 from \$5,920 to \$6,020. Pell Surplus: rescinds \$2.6 billion of the program surplus, leaving \$5.99 billion in surplus to carry over into the next fiscal year.	\$22.5 billion for FY 2018, the same as FY 2017. Keeps the maximum Pell Grant in 2018-2019 at \$5,920. Pell Surplus: rescinds \$3.3 billion of the program surplus, leaving \$5.2 billion in surplus to carry over into the next fiscal year.
Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants	\$733.1 million (same as FY 2017)	\$733.1 million (same as FY 2017)
Federal Work Study Program	\$989.7 million (same as FY 2017)	\$989.7 million (same as FY 2017)
Hispanic Serving Institutions	\$107.8 million (same as FY 2017)	\$107.8 million (same as FY 2017)
Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities	\$244.7 million (same as FY 2017)	\$244.7 million (same as FY 2017)
Federal TRIO Programs	\$953 million (a \$3 million increase from FY 2017).	\$1.01 billion (a \$60 million increase from \$950 million in FY 2017)
GEAR UP	\$339.8 million (same as FY 2017)	\$350 million (a \$10 million increase from \$339.8 million in FY 2017)
Teacher Quality Partnerships	\$38.1 million	\$43 million (same as in FY 2017)
Office of Civil Rights	\$117 million	\$108.5 million (same as in FY 2017)
Student Aid Administration	\$1.6 billion	\$1.7 billion (an increase of \$121 million from FY 2017)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO REVISE TITLE IX GUIDELINES

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced that her department will initiate a notice-and-comment process to revise campus sexual assault guidelines that were put in place during the Obama administration. The center of the conversation over Title IX has been the 2011 “Dear Colleague” letter that clarified to colleges and universities their obligations in preventing and handling campus-based sexual harassment and violence. DeVos stated that this guidance will remain in place during the rulemaking process.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ACTION ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Since assuming office earlier this year, the Trump Administration's higher education policies have taken a number of actions on consumer protection regulations approved during the Obama administration, including:

- Delaying and announced plans to rewrite two Obama administration rules: the Gainful Employment rule and the Borrower Defense rule were put in place in the wake of several for-profit college closures. The Department has announced it will pursue an overhaul of the regulations by appointing separate rule-making committees to renegotiate these rules.
- Delaying loan discharge claims: For most of 2017, the Department did not process claims by students who say they were defrauded by schools that were previously approved by the Department for federal aid. More than 65,000 claims still remain pending, mostly from former students of ITT Technical Institute and Corinthian Colleges.
- Delaying accreditation accountability: The Administration pushed back the deadline to find new accrediting agencies for colleges currently accredited by the discredited accreditor ACICS, which lost Department recognition last year due to concerns regarding its oversight of for-profit colleges.
- Terminated the department's agreements with the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB): The Department will no longer exchange information with CFPB about college abuses against students.

Also of note, the Department has made additional staffing decisions: In August, DeVos appointed, Julian Schmoke Jr., to lead the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Office. Schmoke is a former dean at DeVry University, whose parent company agreed last year to pay \$100 million to resolve allegations the company misled students about their job and salary prospects.