

Federal Policy and Advocacy Update

(Provided by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Information current as of December 6, 2024).

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

The 119th United States (U.S.) Congress will convene on January 3, 2025, with Republicans maintaining their majority in the U.S. House of Representatives and taking control of the U.S. Senate. With the inauguration of former President Donald Trump on January 20, 2025, Republicans will attain a federal government trifecta for the first time since 2017. Overall, Republicans will control 220 seats and Democrats will hold 215 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. For the U.S. Senate, Republicans will control 53 seats and Democrats will hold 47 seats. Of the 52 California representative seats, 43 will be represented by Democrats. Three incoming members served as former state Assemblymembers or Senators (Assemblymember Luz Rivas, Assemblymember Laura Friedman, and Senator Dave Min).

While current Speaker of the House Mike Johnson will retain the same role for the 119th Congress, it is currently unknown who will replace Representative Virginia Foxx (R-North Carolina) as chair of the House Education and Workforce Committee, who is termed out from holding that position. The Senate elected a new Majority Leader, Senator John Thune (R-South Dakota). Current ranking member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Senator Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana) will be named chair, replacing Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont). On November 20, President-elect Trump indicated that he would nominate Linda McMahon as the next secretary for the Department of Education.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On November 21, Senator Mike Rounds (R-South Dakota) introduced the Returning Education to Our States Act (S. 5384), a bill that would eliminate the U.S. Department of Education (USED) and redistribute all critical federal programs to other federal agencies. Under the proposal, the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education Programs would be overseen by the Department of Labor and federal financial aid programs, including Pell Grants, would be under the Department of Treasury. A press release regarding the proposal can be accessed [here](https://www.rounds.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/rounds-introduces-legislation-to-eliminate-us-department-of-education) (www.rounds.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/rounds-introduces-legislation-to-eliminate-us-department-of-education).

ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

On November 21, USED announced the official release of the 2025-26 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), ten days before its December 1 goal. Following the beta period that began on October 1, USED has incorporated feedback from students, parents, schools, community-based organizations, and other partners into the FAFSA process and comprehensively tested the FAFSA form, system, and user supports. In addition, USED released and updated resources and materials to help students and families better navigate the FAFSA form and process.