

# **COVID, Elections, and Funding: Where Education Stands in Washington and Nationwide**

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# Federal Action (or Lack Thereof) on COVID Relief

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- Negotiations over a new virus relief package, including money for schools, have hit a brick wall and fallen down.
- The hang-ups include how much money to provide for private-schools/school choice, and whether to condition education money on whether schools hold in-person classes.
- There is a good chance Congress won't pass a new relief bill before election day.
- The failure has surprised and upset many in the ed. community.

# If Congress Does Eventually Pass a Virus Aid Bill

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- ... Advocates are hoping it includes a lot of emergency support for state and local budgets to stave off big education cuts.
- Other big items on the wish list include upgrades to school infrastructure (think HVAC) and internet connectivity.
- A survey of Beltway “insiders” found most expect education to get around \$100 billion in any bill lawmakers pass.
- How fast will it get to schools? And what will be the allowable uses?

# New CDC Guidelines for Reopening Schools Safely

INDICATORS	Lowest Risk of Transmission in Schools	Lower Risk of Transmission in Schools	Moderate Risk of Transmission in Schools	Higher Risk of Transmission in Schools	Highest Risk of Transmission in Schools
Number of new cases per 100,000 persons within the last 14 days*	<5	5 to <20	20 to <50	50 to ≤ 200	>200
Percentage of RT-PCR tests that are positive during the last 14 days**	<3%	3% to <5%	5% to <8%	8% to ≤ 10%	>10%
<p>Ability of the school to implement 5 key mitigation strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent and correct use of masks</li> <li>• Social distancing to the largest extent possible</li> <li>• Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette</li> <li>• Cleaning and disinfection</li> <li>• Contact tracing in collaboration with local health department</li> </ul>	Implemented <u>all 5</u> strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented <u>all 5</u> strategies correctly but inconsistently	Implemented <u>3-4</u> strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented <u>1-2</u> strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented <u>no</u> strategies

# COVID's Impact on Schools and the 2020 Election

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- An August poll found that people trusted local governments and educators more than Washington officials on the issue of reopening schools.
- Donald Trump has pressured schools to reopen and said Democrats have kept them closed for political reasons.
- Joe Biden has pushed for more funding to help schools reopen their doors to students.
- How much will schools be disrupted in swing states on Nov. 3?

# DeVos, Private Schools, and COVID: An Update

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- Her rule pushed districts to set aside much more money for private school students under “equitable services” than normal.
- Four lawsuits were filed against the rule. Two judges halted it. Then a third judge vacated it. The rule is no longer in effect.
- Congress might dodge the whole issue in a new relief bill.
- Districts have said the whole situation has sewn major confusion as they sort out how to spend COVID relief.

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# A Few Notes About CARES Act Funding

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- Schools have until Sept. 30, 2021, to spend their funding under the CARES Act.
- In addition to district-level CARES funding, governors also got about \$3 billion to spend on higher education.
- One report said the most popular uses of that governor's fund are increasing broadband access and training in remote learning.
- One preliminary estimate we wrote about in April: An 8% cut in state aid in each state wipes out the CARES relief in all

# The Status of Waivers From Nutrition Mandates

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- The Department of Agriculture has extended waivers from school nutrition requirements several times, most recently last month.
- The latest waivers involve letting summer time meal providers continue their work into the school year until December.
- USDA has previously resisted extending these waivers, but there's been a bipartisan push to keep them in place.
- USDA has waived rules for children being with parents when they pick up meals, mass distribution, and meals in group

# COVID's Impact on Layoffs and Enrollment

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- Education Week found that districts with large shares of low-income students that rely a lot on state aid are in jeopardy.
- In June, the Department of Labor said education accounted for two-thirds of the decline in state and local employment. But much of that was driven by furloughs and temporary layoffs.
- Georgia, which cut \$950 million from school funding in June.
- Three states have altered their funding formulas re: COVID to rely on last year's enrollment to try to stave off cuts.

# A New Title IX Rule, and Where It Stands

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- DeVos released a Title IX rule in May that essentially creates a higher bar for determining when schools must respond to a claim of sexual harassment or assault than Obama-era guidance.
- The rule is being challenged in at least two federal lawsuits, but for now it stands (it went into effect Aug. 14).
- The rule also says schools must respond when they have “actual knowledge” of a complaint; again, that’s a higher bar than the Obama guidance.

# Time for Questions and Additional Discussion

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