1. Federal STEM Policy this Month by Della B. Cronin, Principal, Washington Partners, LLC

Congress has left town until September. They left mid-month, but went out with a bang. They did manage to act on every one of the 12 appropriations bills before leaving, even though not a single one has made it to the President’s desk. That means that staff will be working on various scenarios for federal agency funding while their bosses are out of town. A temporary spending bill that keeps governmental wheels turning through the end of the year is expected, but any year-long continuing resolution will be problematic for the Department of Education, since all of their programs are totally reorganized as a result of the enactment of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA).

There was some good news for the STEM education community in the first part of the month—the Student Support and Academic Achievement Grant program in Title IV, Part A of the new law, would receive $1 billion in the House proposal to fund the Department of Education. Even though that level falls far short of the programs $1.65 billion authorized level, it is much higher than the $300 million in the Senate plan. While many deals will be cut before a final plan is released, the STEM education community will be fighting for that number to be as high as possible.

The Department of Education is busily churning out ESSA-related regulations, with lots of reading material for the education community. Not much of the substance is directly related to STEM education, but the proposals affect assessments, accountability and equity in resources—and those factors affect everyone in every school.

Lastly, in presidential politics, the Republican and Democratic parties have released their respective platforms. Their education portions differ significantly, but both mention the importance of teaching and learning STEM education. So, there is some agreement. Some. The next few weeks will be slow in Washington, DC, but the silly season is in full swing. For sure.
2. STEM Tidbits

THE HILL AND MICROSOFT HOST STEM EDUCATION EVENT AT DNC

On July 28th, The Hill, a policy newspaper, hosted a discussion at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia titled “The Workforce of the Future: A Policy Discussion on STEM and Computer Science Education.” Cosponsored by Microsoft, Fred Humphries who is the company’s Vice President of Government Affairs kicked off the affair and spoke to the importance of computer science (CS) and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education as a tool to advance equity and diversity in the workforce. He was followed by an esteemed list of panelists including Governor of Rhode Island, Gina Raimondo (D-RI); Terry McAuliffe, Governor of Virginia (D-VA); Representative Elizabeth Esty (D-CT); Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, Mayor of Gary, Indiana; and Sara Solow, Domestic Policy Advisor to Hilary for America. Governor Raimondo discussed her desire to expand computer science education to every school in Rhode Island by 2017. As this is an ambitious goal, she plans to work with Code.org to expand CS skills training from just 9 high schools in the state to every elementary and middle school as well. Governor McAuliffe brought up how training youth in STEM and CS will help close the skills gap and make America more competitive in the global trade market. His state has embraced partnerships with local community colleges where students of all backgrounds can learn the necessary skills without paying five- and six-figure tuition for a degree. Mayor Freeman-Wilson shared a personal story about her and her daughter which exemplified why it is important to not set low expectations for girls in STEM, consciously or subconsciously. She pushed back against the need to expose children to the arts and insinuated that for young girls it is especially important to overcorrect for years of bias and expose them to math and hard sciences. Finally, Sara Solow and Representative Esty discussed how states are leading the way in computer science education despite the lack of action by Congress.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE MARKS UP FY2017 LHHS SPENDING BILL

On July 14th, the House Appropriations Committee marked up their Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 spending bill. The LHHS bill controls funding for programs at the Departments of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education (ED). The bill proposes a funding level of $161.6 billion, a decrease of $560 million below the FY 2016 enacted level and $2.8 billion below President Obama’s budget request. ED’s proposed funding level is $67 billion; this amount represents a cut of $1.3 billion from FY 2016’s enacted level and is $2.4 billion below the President’s budget request. Special education would see an increase of $500 million and the new Student Support and Academic Achievement Grants, which houses STEM education provisions, would be funded at $1 billion, but over a dozen education programs would either be eliminated or slashed. Additionally, the Pell Grant surplus would be redirected to other spending areas, such as the National Institutes of Health. Over the course of two days, the Committee considered 32 amendments. The markup was tense and partisan at times, with members disagreeing on issues ranging from policy riders to procedural strategies that would result in additional flexibility of spending. Of note, Subcommittee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and her Democratic colleagues offered numerous amendments that would designate Zika, opioid, lead and other focused spending as “emergency” spending, and free up funding to be used to restore areas of the LHHS bill that had been cut. Ultimately, the bill was passed via a party-line vote of 31-19. This is the first time in a decade that the House version of the bill has had two annual consecutive full committee markups. The next step for this bill will be consideration by the full House of Representatives. With Congress in recess until after Labor Day, and the country facing a presidential election, it seems highly unlikely that this bill will end up being debated outside of
an omnibus or continuing resolution spending bill that will cover multiple bills and agencies. That plan will be devised in coming weeks and months. To view the markup in its entirety, along with supporting documents, including legislative and report language, go here.

**ED AND WORKFORCE COMMITTEE PASSES REAUTHORIZED CTE UNANIMOUSLY**
On July 7th, the House Education and the Workforce Committee held a full committee markup of H.R. 5587, *The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*. After a markup remarkable for its bipartisan nature, the Committee voted to pass the bill by a vote of 37-0. There was a consensus among Committee Members that the legislation could be considered by the full House in a bipartisan way. The bill itself has been well-received by the education community affected by its proposals. Since 1984, the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* has provided federal support to state and local career and technical education programs. These programs offer students the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to compete for jobs in a broad range of fields, such as health care and technology. The law was last updated in 2006. According to the sponsors of the bill, including, Representatives Glenn “GT” Thompson (R-PA) and Katherine Clark (D-MA)—along with Representatives Bradley Byrne (R-AL), Carlos Curbelo (R-FL), Jim Langevin (D-RI), and Rick Nolan (D-MN) – the federal law no longer reflects the realities and challenges facing students and workers because it has not been updated in over a decade. Representative Thompson recited that 54% of Americans do not believe their children will have a better future than them, and stated that “We need to do better,” noting that CTE needs to be treated as a “close cousin” instead of “a distant relative” when it comes to federal education programs. He argues this bill does that, while giving states needed flexibility and requiring the appropriate level of accountability without excessive intervention from the Secretary of Education. The Senate is still negotiating its Perkins reauthorization proposal behind the scenes. It has been rumored that accountability and secretarial authority issues have slowed those talks in recent weeks. There is no clear timetable for House floor action on their proposal, either. For more information, including an archived webcast of the hearing, please go [here](#)

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### 3. Announcements, News, and other Notable Updates

**How Women Are Harassed Out of Science**
The Atlantic (July 2016)

**Facebook Donates $15M to Code.org to Diversify Computer Science Education**
EdSurge (July 2016)

**NPRM Comments for ESSA State Plans and Accountability**
Comments due Aug. 1, 2016

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### 4. Upcoming Deadlines and Events

**McNair Partnerships with Undergraduate Research Initiatives Webinar**
Register by Aug. 11, 2016

**Building on President’s Call to Expand Computer Science Education in K-12 Schools**
Deadline: Aug. 12, 2016

**Research Experiences for Undergraduates Symposium (REUS) Conference**
Deadline Aug. 18, 2016
Initiating and Sustaining Undergraduate Research Programs (ISURP) Institute  
Deadline Aug. 18, 2016

Creative Inquiry in the Arts and Humanities Institute  
Deadline Sept. 28, 2016

Beginning a Research Program in the Natural Sciences at a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution Institute  
Deadline October 17, 2016

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