



2026 NATIONAL
**POLICY
SEMINAR**

Legislative Update

March 23, 2026

March 22-25
Crystal Gateway Marriott
Arlington, Virginia

acteonline.org/nps

#NPSCTE26

119th Congress

- House of Representatives –
217 Republicans; 214 Democrats; 1 Independent; 3 vacant seats (2R, 1D)
 - Speaker of the House: Mike Johnson (R-LA)
 - House Majority Leader: Steve Scalise (R-LA)
 - House Minority Leader: Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY)
- U.S. Senate: 53 Republicans – 47 Democrats
 - Senate Majority Leader: John Thune (R-SD)
 - Senate Minority Leader: Chuck Schumer (D-NY)

Political Landscape

- Narrow margins create challenges for party leaders
- While the GOP controls both chambers and can set the agenda, the razor-thin margins can make any individual lawmaker very important
 - Policy outcomes often hinge on just a handful of votes
- Significant focus on the filibuster in the Senate and other procedural issues
- Election is center stage:
 - With the midterms approaching, lawmakers are already shifting their focus to their re-election campaigns
 - Primaries have created significant tension

Current Congressional Agenda

- Department of Homeland Security FY 2026 funding (currently shut down)
- SAVE America Act
- Iran war supplemental funding
- Potential budget reconciliation package
- Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act expiration
- FY 2027 funding
- ???

FY 2026 Appropriations

- Kicked off with Administration budget request in May – deep cuts to education and workforce programs
- Fraught with challenges
 - Significant disagreement between House and Senate in early bills
 - Record setting 43-day government shutdown
- Congress wrapped up funding for Fiscal Year 2026 for all agencies (except Homeland Security) in three packages – last passed in Feb.
 - Largely level funding for education and workforce
 - FY 26 Perkins Funding: \$1.4 billion

FY 2027 Appropriations

- Lawmakers are beginning work on FY27
- Administration's budget request expected week of March 30 (maybe April 3)
- House Labor-HHS-Education deadline for programmatic and earmark requests: 3/27
 - House CTE Caucus Dear Colleague is circulating for signatures
 - **DEADLINE: 3/24 at 5pm!!**
 - Senate Dear Colleague to be circulated at end of March
- Senate Deadline: 4/16



Legislative Priority:

Increase the Federal Investment in CTE

- The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act is the primary source of federal funding to support CTE programs across the country.
- Accounting for inflation, the Perkins Basic State Grant program is still several hundred million dollars below its funding level from twenty years ago.
- For FY 2027, we are requesting that Congress increase funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant

Department of Education Restructuring

- Administration has prioritized eliminating the Department of Education
- This cannot legally be accomplished without Congress, so instead:
 - Significant staff positions have been eliminated, with potential for more
 - Staffing dropped from about 4,100 to around 2,400 through layoffs and buyouts
 - Additional layoffs attempted during shutdown but paused by courts and then Congress
 - Discretionary grants/contracts have been cancelled
 - Numerous agreements have been signed to move program administration to other agencies
 - Over 100 programs moved to other agencies

Perkins Move to DOL

- Interagency agreement between ED and DOL signed 5/21 to transfer administration of Perkins
- Initially paused due to court injunctions
- Department announced “workforce development partnership” on 7/15
- Program functions officially moved in September
- Significant administrative and bureaucratic challenges during transition
- Being used as a model for other moves



Other Interagency Agreements

New IAAs announced Nov. 18:

- The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education programs and the Office of Postsecondary Education institution-based programs are moving to the Department of Labor
- The administration of Indian Education programs is moving to the Department of the Interior
- The administration of International Education and Foreign Language programs is moving to the Department of State
- Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) and Foreign Medical Accreditation are moving to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Other Interagency Agreements

- Two new agreements announced on Feb. 23
 - Department of State will partner with ED on the Section 117 foreign gift reporting
 - Department of Health and Human Services will partner with ED on family engagement and school support programs
- Another agreement on March 19
 - Department of Treasury will begin taking over the student loan portfolio

Educator Development Policy

- Lost some momentum in Congress – not as many bills moving in this environment
- Concerns about new loan limits and impact on potential educators/administrators
- Numerous teacher pipeline related grants/contracts cancelled last year
- Need to reengage policymakers on critical issues

Federal Data and Research

- Vast majority of staff at the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) – approximately 90% - were included in RIFs/other force reductions
- Significant cuts to research contracts (almost \$1 billion cut), including Regional Educational Labs
- Request for comments on reforming IES in late 2025
- New report on reimagining IES released in late February
 - Focus on more urgent challenges – consolidate focus
 - Multi-state grants that seek to scale interventions
 - Focus on practicality, innovation and relevance
 - CTE and WBL identified as potential priorities

ACTE Legislative Priority: Maintain Strong Support for Public Education and Educators

- Ensure the Department of Education is maintained as outlined in current law and is organized and staffed in a robust way to continue to administer all congressionally appropriated programs.
- Provide meaningful oversight to ensure that all congressionally appropriated programs are carried out with fidelity and in a maximally efficient and effective manner.
- Sustain robust funding across the entire education and workforce development continuum to ensure CTE programs and learners have all the support, tools and resources they need to complete their educational journey.
- Improve educator recruitment and retention by making teaching a more financially attractive career and increasing access to high-quality teacher preparation and professional development programs.
- Prioritize the importance of the federal role in education data and research through robust funding and support and continue to emphasize data collections that assess student longitudinal outcomes across education and workforce pipelines.

Reauthorization Bills to Watch

- Perkins
 - More details on our priorities to come
 - Unlikely for this Congress
 - CTE Hearings in both House and Senate
 - Nov. 19 – House Education and Workforce
 - Dec. 9 – Senate HELP
 - Feb. 24 – House Small Business
- Apprenticeships
- WIOA

WIOA

- WIOA still remains an interest in the 119th Congress with bipartisan interest on building on “A Stronger Workforce for America Act
- Reauthorization efforts are currently stalled over proposed budget cuts in programs such as:
 - Adult Education
 - Job Corps
 - Youth Build
 - Dislocated Worker Services

Apprenticeships

- Strong bipartisan interest also remains in apprenticeships
- Policymakers prioritize:
 - Employer-led training models
 - Earn-and-learn opportunities
 - Stronger integration with education systems
- Proposals Include:
 - Increased funding streams
 - Sector partnerships

ACTE Legislative Priority: Strengthen Workforce Pathways through CTE

- Include CTE stakeholders in WIOA governing bodies and provides dedicated funding for WIOA infrastructure costs to remove the burden from partner programs.
- Increase the availability of workforce services and supports for in-school youth.
- Improve data system capacity and transparency so workforce outcomes of education programs can be measured clearly.
- Balance requirements placed on WIOA eligible training providers that offer high-quality CTE programs to ensure robust participation in the workforce system.
- Formalize definitions and quality expectations for all apprenticeship activities, including pre-apprenticeship and youth apprenticeship programs, to provide clarity to education providers.
- Promote CTE programs serving as related technical instruction providers for apprenticeship programs and emphasize strong linkages between youth and pre-apprenticeships and CTE programs.

AI Interest in Congress

- Series of hearings in the House
 - 1/14 – Building an AI-Ready America
 - 2/3 – Adopting AI at Work
 - 2/11 – Safer Workplaces Through Smarter Technology
 - 2/24 – Teaching in the AI Age
 - 3/4 – Strengthening Employer-Led Training
- Over 150 bills in the 118th Congress; number escalating
- Sen. Blackburn (R-TN) recently introduced comprehensive AI framework
- Other related bills like Kids Online Safety Act
- Senate Commerce Committee – “Plugged Out: Examining the Impact of Technology on America’s Youth”

National AI Legislative Framework

- Released by the Trump Administration on March 20
- Focus on preempting state policies
- Six key objectives:
 1. Protecting Children and Empowering Parents
 2. Safeguarding and Strengthening American Communities
 3. Respecting Intellectual Property Rights and Supporting Creators
 4. Preventing Censorship and Protecting Free Speech
 5. Enabling Innovation and Ensuring American AI Dominance
 6. Educating Americans and Developing an AI-Ready Workforce

ACTE Legislative Priority: Thoughtfully Consider How AI Can Support Educators and Learners

- Invest in AI literacy initiatives and workforce-aligned skill development to ensure learners are prepared to work with and alongside AI technologies.
- Prioritize professional development opportunities that equip educators with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively integrate AI into the classroom.
- Protect student data privacy and promote the responsible and ethical use of AI technologies in education and workforce systems.
- Ensure any new policies are flexible and adaptable so that educators can design instruction that is most appropriate to learners' needs, even as technology and education systems change.



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Hill Visit Logistics

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Getting to the Hill

- Can take Yellow or Blue Lines when leaving Crystal City Metro
- House:
 - Blue line is more roundabout but is a direct line
 - If taking Yellow line, transfer to Blue/Orange/Silver at L'Enfant Plaza
 - Exit at Capitol South
- Senate: Transfer to Red line at Metro Center (Blue line) or Gallery Place (Yellow line), exit at Union Station

Meeting Process

- Before the meeting:
 - Review materials
 - Coordinate roles with other participants
 - Arrive early (anticipate Metro delays)
- During meeting:
 - Introduce yourself and your role/relationship to CTE
 - Mention you're attending NPS as a representative of CTE and ACTE
 - Cover priority topics/asks
 - Thank them for their time
- After your meeting:
 - Promote the visit on social media (#NPSCTE25)
 - Write a thank you note (we have 3 templates for various scenarios).
 - Follow up on any promises or requests for information

Hill Meeting Best Practices

- Be Prepared & Focused
- Budget Your Time
- Be Personal
- Know Your Audience
- Stay Non-partisan
- Request Specific Action
- Leave Contact Information
- Follow Up!

****They do not expect you to be a policy expert!**

Keep it Local!

- Discuss how CTE is meeting your community's economic needs
- Provide examples of innovative CTE programs
- Tell inspiring stories about CTE students and educators
- Demonstrate how CTE works for nontraditional or underrepresented students, adults, disconnected youth, and others in your program
- Discuss how CTE provides pathways for students to pursue further education
- Paint a picture of how additional funding, resources, and support could make a difference in your local community!

Meeting Follow Up and Leave Behinds

Leave Behind Folders:

- ACTE Legislative Priorities
- “What is CTE?” Infographic
- Caucus Membership Dear Colleague Letters (House and Senate front/back)
- State Fact Sheets (if requested)
- Reception Invite (hand to staff)

How to Follow-Up

- Send a personal email
- Reiterate your “ask” and/or promises made in the meeting
- Provide any data or information requested as soon as you can
- Make it personal!
- Fill out a visit report form with ACTE

State Planning Time

5:00pm

1. Review visit schedule
2. Review talking points
3. Identify relevant info about each Member
4. Plan your “route”
5. Select a leader for each visit
6. Assign group roles
7. Determine how to incorporate leave behinds
8. Note relevant data or anecdotes
9. Ask questions!!

Contact Information

Alisha Hyslop

727-642-0491

ahyslop@acteonline.org

Jimmy Koch

443-834-3421

jkoch@acteonline.org