



## Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Team

August 20, 2021

# NSBA Weekly Update

## Congressional Update

### Congress Remains on Recess

After a flurry of activity last week in the Senate, legislative action on Capitol Hill has been relatively quiet this week as both chambers of Congress remain on recess. In anticipation of the House's early return from its annual August holiday, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) recently [instructed](#) the House Rules Committee to begin work crafting a rule that will allow votes to commence next week on a bipartisan infrastructure package, recently approved by the Senate, along with a budget resolution advancing Congressional Democrats' separate efforts to pass a sizeable amount of President Biden's Build Back Better [agenda](#). By linking both proposals together in this way, Congressional Democratic Leadership aims to garner the votes needed to pass these bills in both chambers in the weeks ahead.

As this process unfolds, NSBA's advocacy team will continue to work to ensure that lawmakers appreciate the significant infrastructure needs of the K-12 community.

## Administration Update

### USED Announces Civil Rights Data Collection

Late last week, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced in a [letter](#) to school superintendents that it will move forward with the normally biannual Civil Rights Data Collection ([CRDC](#)) for the coming 2021-22 school year. This would mark the first time that USED's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has conducted this critically important data collection over consecutive years. The Department hopes that the newly added data collection will ". . . advance equity at a time when the nation's educational landscape has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and schools are receiving substantial new federal funding to address new and longstanding challenges." A press release from the Department, detailing these changes, can be found [here](#).

### President Biden Directs USED to Push Back on State Anti-Mask Mandates

On Wednesday, August 18, President Biden issued a [memo](#) directing U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona to "use all available tools" at his Department's disposal to ensure a return to safe, in-person K-12 instruction for the upcoming 2021-22 school year. The directive comes amid a wave of Republican-led states imposing new laws or regulations preventing school districts and institutions from implementing mask mandates—a key COVID-19 mitigation strategy. "As I've said before, if you aren't going to fight COVID-19, at least get out of the way of everyone else who is trying . . . we're not going to sit by as governors try to block and intimidate educators protecting our children," Biden said during an [address](#) on Wednesday.

## **Department of Education to Host Webinar on Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction**

The U.S. Department of Education is hosting a webinar series to support educational settings in safely sustaining or returning to in-person instruction. The series features lessons learned and best practices from faculty, staff, schools, districts, institutions of higher education, early childhood education providers, and other places of educational instruction describing approaches to operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. The next webinar, *Returning to School: Strategies for Reengaging PreK-12 Students*, scheduled for Wednesday, August 25, 2021, from 3:00-4:15pm ET. Following brief presentation by the federal agencies, field-based practitioners will share strategies they have found effective to reengage students, including special populations, through outreach and sustained connections. You must [register](#) to participate.

## **NSBA Update**

On Aug. 16, the leadership and members of the National School Boards Association met with U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona in a [virtual town hall meeting](#) to discuss back-to-school challenges and the Education Department's [Return to School Roadmap](#). Secretary Cardona provided answers and insight to many questions in real time about a variety of challenges facing school board members. During the town hall, NSBA President Dr. Viola M. Garcia acknowledged Secretary Cardona's support for the local efforts of school boards to help keep our children and educators safe.

As discussed on the Monday CSALS call, we will not be holding an in-person CSALS meeting in October. We discussed possible alternatives and we will work with the members of the group to plan an alternative.

We do not have a CSALS meeting next Monday. The next meeting will be Monday, August 30.