



On Target

AFT Local #2569

December 2018



Clarence Teachers Make the Difference

The best — and worst — education news of 2018



Teachers rally outside the Arizona Capitol on April 27 in Phoenix. Teachers in Arizona and Colorado walked out of their classes over low salaries, keeping hundreds of thousands of students out of school. It's the latest in a series of strikes across the nation over low teacher pay. (Matt York/AP)

By **Valerie Strauss**

December 7

Every December veteran educator Larry Ferlazzo looks at the year in education news and makes his list of what he thinks the best — and the worst — of it was.

Of course it is subjective, and if you disagree with him, tell him (nicely) in the comments.

Ferlazzo is a teacher of English and social studies at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento. He has written [numerous](#) books on education, writes a [teacher advice blog](#) for Education Week Teacher and has his own popular [resource-sharing blog](#).

See whether you agree with his assessment. You can find links to his lists from past years at the bottom of this post.

By Larry Ferlazzo

As usual, I don't presume to say this compilation is all-encompassing, so I hope you'll take time to share your own choices. I'll list the ones I think are the best first, followed by the worst. It's too hard to rank them within those categories, so **I'm not listing** them in any order.

The Best Education News Of 2018

* The November elections brought lots of good news:

- The new Democratic majority in the House [might be able to hold](#) Betsy DeVos more accountable.
- [Three additional states](#) voted for Medicaid expansion, which should help huge numbers of kids and their families ([research has already shown](#) the positive impact on students when they have health insurance).
- [Dozens of teachers](#) won elections across the United States, including [2016 National Teacher of the Year Jahana Hayes](#) (who became the first African American congresswoman from Connecticut).
- [Tony Thurmond defeated Marshall Tuck](#) and his millions of dollars from charter-school backers to become state superintendent of public instruction here in California.

It wasn't all good news, and some [school funding measures lost](#), but — overall — it was a very positive development for education.

* The teacher strikes that hit across the United States in the first part of the year — and the public support they received — won some concrete improvements for teachers and schools. Beginning in West Virginia and then spreading to Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona and other areas, [#RedForEd](#) brought attention to the teacher compensation crisis, along with the need for increased overall education funding.

* School shootings are tragic and are highlighted in the “Worst News” section. However, [how students have channeled grief and anger into organizing against gun violence](#) has to be listed here under “Best News.”

* Even a die-hard Warriors fan like me can admire LeBron James for his basketball skills and his community commitment. [He's putting millions into supporting a public school](#) in Akron, Ohio, that is implementing lots of ideas that researchers say should work.

* There have been several important and positive developments in the field of education research.

- A misleading “graph that never dies” is often used by opponents of school funding to supposedly show that, [despite evidence](#), additional education moneys do not help students. At long last, two education journalists published accessible

explanations about how that graph, and other versions of it, are wrong. You can read Matt Barnum's article [here](#) and Matthew Di Carlo's [here](#).

- In addition, education researcher C. Kirabo Jackson co-authored a study finding something that all teachers know many critics appear to not understand: [reduced school funding results in reduced student academic achievement](#). One would hope that this fact might dissuade some from ranting about us teachers "needing to do more with less."
- Kirabo also authored [another important study](#) that found "the impact of teachers on behavior is 10 times more predictive of whether they increase students' high school completion than their impacts on test scores." Perhaps advocates of [value-added measurement](#) to assess teachers might want to take note.

* [The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation admitted](#) that, after spending \$575 million on pushing teacher evaluation efforts, the policies they were pushing [didn't work](#). The good news isn't that they wasted their money. Instead, the good news *might* be that a failure of that magnitude might reduce their level of hubris going forward. Though I'm holding my breath, it would be nice if newer education mega-funders would learn the same lesson a bit sooner.

* I've long been concerned about the [manipulation and poor implementation of Social Emotional Learning](#) and what can often be [its lack of connection to racial equity issues](#). The Aspen Institute published a report raising those issues very eloquently: "[Pursuing Social and Emotional Development Through a Racial Equity Lens: A Call to Action](#)." I have questioned the value of some of the reports Aspen has put out about SEL, but I think this one should be studied by every school that thinks it is emphasizing SEL at its site.

* School dress codes can be problematic in many ways, including often being sexist and racist. However, thanks to student and community input, and more reflection on the part of educators, there appears to be momentum toward [making dress codes more equitable](#).

* New York Mayor Bill de Blasio (D) has [initiated an effort](#) to make the city's [specialized high schools more diverse](#). A similar effort is going on in our Sacramento school district. We can only hope that these are just tips of the iceberg, and that schools around the country will create initiatives to increase the number of students of color in academically advanced programs/schools.

* Millions of students had great learning experiences in their schools this year.

The Worst Education News Of 2018

* Tragic [school shootings](#), at Parkland and at [Santa Fe High schools](#), along with [others](#), make The Onion's headline "['No Way To Prevent This,' Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens](#)" a regular truism. However, the "Best News" section highlights the incredible organizing done by students in response to gun violence.

* [The Supreme Court ruling in the Janus case](#) was a huge blow to teachers unions, educators, students and their families. On the face of it, letting people gain the benefit of union representation without having to pay for it is [just not fair](#). But it's safe to say teachers unions are here to stay. As the saying goes, "[Don't mourn — organize!](#)"

* The terrible Trump administration policy of [separating refugee parents](#) from their children on our southern border resulted in [widespread revulsion](#), including from [educators](#). Fortunately, the public outcry forced the [end of that terrible policy](#). However, the children, their parents and their teachers will be dealing [with its negative impact for years to come](#).

* The Trump administration considered another bad idea (one of many). This one was to [merge the Education and Labor Departments](#). It didn't [go anywhere](#). And speaking of bad ideas, DeVos proposed eliminating the federal office supervising English Language Learners. After all, there are only 5 million ELLs in our nation's schools — why should there be a federal office looking out for them?

* DeVos did not make millions of students and their families feel safe when she initially said that it was [up to individual schools](#) if they wanted to report undocumented students to immigration authorities. She finally [admitted that she was wrong](#), but it's not as if immigrant families need *more* reasons to feel insecure. President Trump added fuel to the fire when he proposed ending birthright citizenship. How many of us teachers are going to have our students asking us, "[Am I still going to be a citizen?](#)" Of course, he didn't stop there as he continued [demonizing immigrants](#) by attacking the thousands of Central Americans in migrant caravans, including many families, fleeing violence in their countries.

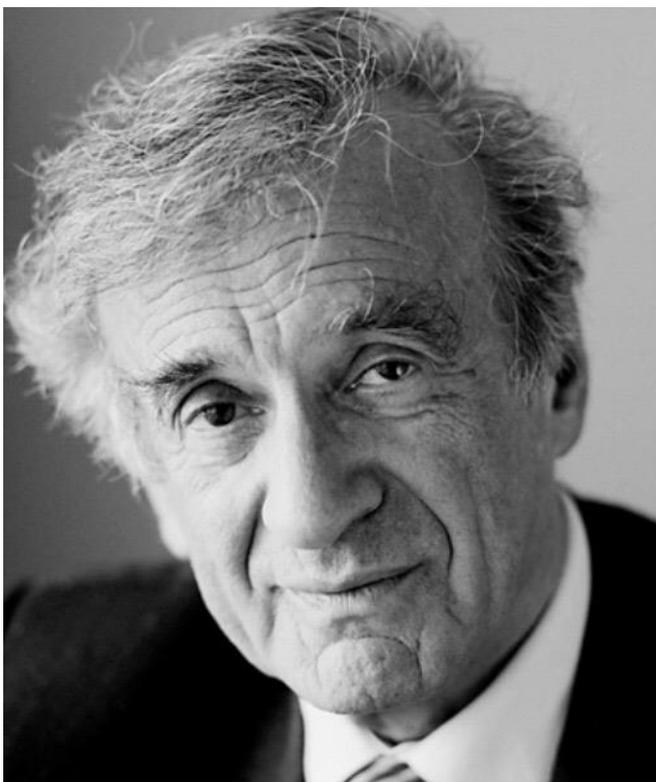
* [African American children are continuing to find themselves targeted](#), ranging from a 9-year-old being falsely accusing of groping a woman to a 12-year-old having the police called on him because he accidentally mowed part of the wrong yard. And many schools are no refuge from this harassment as the [Government Accountability Office found](#) that African Americans are disproportionately suspended. Yet, in the face of this evidence, the Education Department has [reduced its investigations](#) of civil rights complaints against

schools. Fortunately, the department's [Inspector General announced plans](#) to look at dismissals of these complaints. By the way, you can check out if there have been complaints against your school at this [ProPublica database](#).

* The K-12 T.M. Landry School in Louisiana — the source for all those viral videos of African American students learning they were accepted at Ivy League schools — [was exposed for fraudulent academic records](#) and child abuse. It was just the latest “[miracle](#)” school that has had the curtain ripped off it. When will the public, and reporters, learn that when a school sounds too good to be true, it probably is?

* The [closure of 265 schools](#) in Puerto Rico is certainly not going to help families there recover from Hurricane Maria. [Plenty of research](#) has shown the negative impacts that school closures have on students and communities. In fact, a [new study](#) came out recently. [We can hope that this new school year](#) goes well for to teachers, students and their families, though, I suspect they would rather have had an [effective disaster response plan](#) to the disaster instead of our thoughts and prayers now.

* Millions of students should have gotten a better education than they did this year.



“I swore never to be silent
whenever and wherever
human beings endure
suffering and humiliation.
We must always take sides.
Neutrality helps the oppressor,
never the victim.
Silence encourages
the tormentor,
never the tormented.”

– Elie Wiesel

Photo Credit: Sergey Bermeniev/npr
HistoryByZim.com

Defying Predictions, Union Membership Isn't Dropping Post-Janus

The Supreme Court's ruling was expected to diminish union membership. But so far, many unions have actually increased their numbers since the verdict. Conservative groups are working to reverse that trend in the long run.

DECEMBER 10, 2018



Union activists and supporters rally against the Supreme Court's ruling in the Janus v. AFSCME case. (AP/Karla Ann Cote)

By Katherine Barrett & Richard Greene | Columnists

Government management experts. Their website is greenebarrett.com.

Five months ago, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt what was **seen as a massive blow** to unions in Janus v. AFSCME. The justices banned the collection of union fees from public workers who receive union-negotiated benefits but choose not to belong to the union.

The ruling had an immediate negative effect on union finances. In Pennsylvania, for instance, refunding fees to nonmembers resulted in a roughly 15 percent loss of the \$42.5 million that unions collected from executive branch members and nonmembers in 2017, according to the state's Office of Administration.

The court's decision also led many to predict that massive defections of union members would follow. But so far, even as anti-union organizations wage campaigns to convince members to drop out, most are staying put. Some unions have actually increased their numbers since the Janus verdict.

“I think the right wing thought this would decimate public-sector unions, and they were clearly wrong,” says Kim Cook of the Cornell University Worker Institute, which provides research and education in support of unions and workers’ rights.

According to Lee Saunders, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, “After the Janus case, public-service workers are choosing to join AFSCME at a much higher rate than those who drop.”

But Ken Girardin, analyst for the fiscally conservative Empire Center for Public Policy in New York, says that many employees are still uninformed about their right to leave unions and that it will take a few years to see significant declines in membership.

“Based on what we’ve observed, you will likely see a multi-year drop in membership, driven chiefly by the fact that people aren’t going to join in the first place,” says Girardin. “The next cohorts of employees won’t join at the same rate as the retirees they are replacing.”

In the meantime, state unions are seeing similar trends to AFSCME.

In Pennsylvania, 50,072 state executive branch employees were members of unions at the time of the Janus decision. That number has increased to 51,127, according to the state’s Office of Administration. In Oregon, the Local 503 chapter of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) **reported in September** that new union members have outnumbered dropouts by three to two. In California, **data from the Controller’s Office** show a small increase in state employee union membership, which totaled 131,410 in October -- up a small fraction from 131,192 in June.

“The decision didn’t have the major impact on membership that was anticipated,” says Science Meles, executive vice president of a Chicago chapter of SEIU, which had about 23,800 members in August 2017 and now has about 26,000.

While the National Education Association, which represents roughly 3 million employees of schools and colleges, says it immediately lost dues from 87,000 people who were nonmembers being charged, it has not seen a significant drop

in membership. According to Staci Maiers, the group's senior press officer, "Our affiliates have signed up more new members as of October 1 than they have previously by this point in time."

Why Hasn't Union Membership Dropped Since Janus?

Fearing a loss at the Supreme Court, unions have been running aggressive membership drives **since before the Janus ruling**. Their membership may also be sustaining or thriving because people aren't aware of the Janus decision or because of actions taken by states to protect unions. As we **previously reported**, some Democratically controlled states have recently made it harder for public employees to leave unions.

New Jersey limited the time frame when government workers can withdraw from their union. New York banned state agencies from releasing employees' personal data that could be used by union-busting groups to persuade members to pull out. California, New Jersey and Washington now prohibit public employers from discouraging union membership and guarantee unions full access to hiring orientation sessions so they can explain the advantages of membership. In New Jersey, employers that break this law will be forced to reimburse unions for any lost dues.

Due to procedural hurdles and union tactics, the "number of folks who have successfully resigned post-Janus is much smaller than the number that have attempted to resign," says Maxford Nelsen, director of labor policy for the Freedom Foundation, which has waged an aggressive campaign in the Northwest to urge public-sector employees to give up their union membership.

Meanwhile, labor experts believe that counter-legislation will emerge that seeks to lessen union power. When conservative lawmakers convened at the American Legislative Exchange Council conference last month, Mark Janus himself, the plaintiff in the Supreme Court case, **urged them** to champion the model bills ALEC is pushing that would further hurt unions.

In Pennsylvania, a Senate committee held a hearing at the end of October to consider a comprehensive bill that would change the commonwealth's practices to make it easier to leave unions.

"If the rules aren't settled now by legislation, they will be determined by aggressive tactics by unions to keep their members," said Terrence J. Pell, president of the Center for Individual Rights, at the Senate hearing.

Groups that cheered the Janus ruling are also continuing to take laws that protect unions to court. The Fairness Center, self-described as "a public interest law firm that provides free legal services to those hurt by public-sector union officials," is suing AFSCME over a Pennsylvania law that lets unions impose a limited time frame in which members can drop out.

But some say the ultimate survival of public-sector unions will depend not on preventing dropouts but on their ability to convince new employees that union membership is important.

"As new employees are hired, unions have to make a pretty strong case that people should join," says Cook of the Worker Institute. "We're feeling good about the lack of impact so far on union membership because of the Janus decision. But that's no guarantee for the long run."

• Editor's Note

Each month the On Target will come out near the end of the month.

If you have something that you would like included, please send as a **Word document** by the 20th of the month to:
lponek@clarenceschools.org

Items that could be included are: Articles dealing with education/unions, Good ideas for teaching, something humorous/light dealing with education, Information for sharing, Opinion pieces on education, Advertisement for a service you provide.

Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos continue to attack protections for students

Federal Commission on School Safety includes recommendations that would harm students

WASHINGTON - December 18, 2018 -

Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos created the Federal Commission on School Safety that was supposed to address gun violence in our schools and recommend actions schools should take to keep our students safe. Instead, their commission announced today that it recommends stripping students' of civil rights protections, which seek to prevent racial disparities in student discipline. Although the report does not endorse the DeVos idea that teachers should be forced to carry firearms in school, it does recommend pressuring educators to possess dangerous firearms in our schools.

The following statement can be attributed to [NEA President Lily Eskelsen García](#):

“Instead of the Federal Commission on School Safety taking its charge seriously — addressing gun laws in this country and putting supports in place for students after the horrors of Parkland, Marshall County, Santa Fe and the countless other school shootings that have occurred this year — Betsy DeVos and the commission are doing the exact opposite. The recommendations do little to make students safer in our nation’s public schools. They are dishonoring the memory of the students and educators who have lost their lives.

“More to the point, today’s announcement is further proof that we cannot count on Betsy DeVos to protect students’ civil rights. Her decision to rescind critical federal guidance meant to address racial disparities in school discipline undermines the safety and dignity of students and educators in our public schools.

“Schools should continue to advance responsible and fair discipline policies and practices because they are best for students, the learning environment and meet legal obligations to address discrimination. Educators, schools and school districts must continue to enforce anti-discrimination laws. Period.”

“Betsy DeVos’ U.S. Department of Education is using the commission to pursue her agenda to dismantle students’ civil rights protections — an agenda that affects our most vulnerable students the hardest. We do not need the appearance of safety; we need real solutions that create safe schools and address the underlying root of school violence. We need strategies to create positive, supportive learning environments and prevention efforts that end the hardening and over-policing of our public schools.

“The commission’s recommendations were decided in a vacuum without any real input from the real education experts — America’s teachers and school personnel working in public schools. We do not need more guns in schools. Students deserve real solutions that will keep them safe — that is what our students have asked of us. It is shameful that the Trump Administration is using the real risk of gun violence in our schools to strip vulnerable students of their civil rights, while doing nothing to keep all our students safe.”

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#

DECEMBER 15, 2018

Pallotta says APPR is job one for new Legislature

Author: Ned Hoskin
Source: NYSUT United



In April, it looked like a slam dunk.

NYSUT-backed legislation to fix the broken test-and-punish teacher evaluation system had strong bipartisan support in both houses.

By the end of June, thanks to the cynical Republican leadership in the Senate, it rolled to a stop like a deflated basketball.

As we prepare for the 2019 legislative session in New York, the game has changed.

Thanks in large part to the union's support, Democrats won enough state Senate races in November's general elections to secure a majority for the first time since 2010, and in the process gained control of the New York State Legislature. It's time for a reset.

"Now that we have a new Senate, we would hope that their first order of business would be to fix this broken testing and evaluation system," President Andy Pallotta told Newsday. The Annual Professional Performance Review law that was passed almost unanimously by the Assembly and blocked by the Republican leadership in the Senate last spring should be reintroduced when the 2019 session opens in January, he said.

Pallotta promised NYSUT will work with the Assembly and the Senate, now led by Democrats who owe their powerful majority to support from our union members, to pass a bill again.

“Our bill was derailed by senators who voted to enrich their anti-union, anti-public-education donors at the expense of students, parents and educators,” Pallotta said. “We need to complete that legislative commitment to local control and collective bargaining.”

What else does the change of power mean in the new legislative session? Funding For years, NYSUT has worked with Assembly Democrats to seek more equitable state aid for schools and public higher education.

Virtually every progressive Democrat who ran for office campaigned on the need to provide more state funding for local districts. Advocates say the state’s 2003 Foundation Aid Formula, which was supposed to ensure fairer, more predictable distribution of aid, has never been implemented and the state owes billions to districts.

NYSUT also will continue to work with the Assembly and the new Senate leadership to ensure adequate and equitable funding for our chronically underfunded public higher education systems.

Tax cap

NYSUT has advocated many common-sense changes to the ill-conceived tax cap law that could make it more equitable and affordable for local institutions, including exemptions for certain capital expenses, mandatory costs and security investments. The union also seeks to eliminate the undemocratic 60 percent supermajority requirement to pass a local budget that exceeds the cap. NYSUT maintains the new Senate could remove many of the obstacles to these common-sense proposals.

Charter schools

Thanks to campaign donations from wealthy, private supporters of the charter school industry, the publicly funded but privately operated schools have enjoyed benevolent backing from Senate Republicans. NYSUT supported numerous progressive Democrats who want to increase oversight, transparency and accountability of the schools. Proposals to regulate them more closely routinely failed in the GOP-controlled Senate.

The state recently approved more charter school openings in New York City, moving closer to a legal limit on how many charters can operate in the state. The industry will be lobbying to raise that limit, and NYSUT will be working to cap it.

December 13, 2018

BOCES union leaders voice concerns on staff shortages and increased violence

Author: Sylvia Saunders

Source: NYSUT Communications



Caption: United BOCES TA President John Dedrick talks about how his Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES has added counselors to help address student needs. Photo by Sylvia Saunders.

Concerned with the violent conditions in too many BOCES classrooms, union leaders say a critical shortage of staff is exacerbating an already challenging learning environment in which problems only seem to be increasing.

“We’re losing staff and we’re burning out our good staff,” said Tracie Clark, president of Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES Federation of Teachers. “We had 100 new staff this year.”

There were knowing nods around the room, as about 30 local union leaders gathered last weekend for NYSUT’s BOCES Leadership Council. One upstate leader noted their staff has already had 10 serious injuries — more than they usually experience in an entire school year.

Leaders of BOCES around the state reported an uptick in staff injuries and tremendous difficulty hiring— and keeping — teaching assistants and aides. Leaders also expressed frustration that their BOCES administrators accept students with disabilities who need 1:1 supervision before the necessary staff person is hired.

“It’s just expected we’ll fill in the gaps when a classroom is out of compliance,” said one BOCES leader. “It’s a huge frustration.”

Local leaders shared ideas on contract language that could help. For example, Douglas Andreotti of United Staff Association of Putnam and Northern Westchester BOCES said the union pushed for a plan on how to appropriately move staff around when staffers call in sick. The union also successfully advocated for raising the pay for substitute staffers. Some BOCES have won contract provisions that ensure injured staffers out on worker’s compensation do not lose pay. Another leader explained how he has successfully filed a grievance to force the district to provide bite guards and protective gloves.

United BOCES TA President John Dedrick said his Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming BOCES is having good success with a new model that increased the number of counselors to work with teachers. He said component districts are willing to pay higher tuition costs for students who need acute mental health services.

NYSUT’s David Rothfuss, an expert on special education services, urged leaders to pay close attention to documentation — filing incident reports, keeping copies of communication with administration and parents, and participating in district-wide school safety teams. He said the State Education Department has expressed a willingness to meet on ongoing BOCES concerns.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango discussed [the union’s “Take a Look at Teaching” initiative](#) and urged BOCES leaders to consider hosting a roundtable event to explore ways to recruit and retain high-need special education and Career and Technical Education staffers.

NYSUT Legislative Representative Jackie Paredes said the union is advocating for a workplace violence safety bill, along with a host of other BOCES issues. She also encouraged leaders to be a part of the BOCES Lobby Day on Feb. 27.

“It’s a [one-of-a-kind lobby day](#), because our members are there side by side with administrators, parents and students,” she said. “Legislators are going to remember you, your students and your stories.”

“It makes a real impression to have the students with you,” said Jim Beck of BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk. “It changes the whole dynamic and works wonders with the legislators.”

Betsy DeVos gets bad reviews from employees as morale at Education Department plummets, survey finds



Since Betsy DeVos became education secretary, morale in her department has plummeted. (Jacquelyn Martin/AP)

By **Valerie Strauss**

December 12

Job satisfaction at the U.S. Education Department has plummeted over the past year, according to an annual survey of federal employees.

The Education Department had a morale drop of 12.4 percentage points — from 59.7 percent in 2017 to 47.3 percent in 2018. It was one of the steepest declines among all federal agencies, the 2018 [Best Places to Work in the Federal Government](#) report said.

Education Department spokeswoman Elizabeth Hill said the change in job satisfaction resulted from the new path Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has taken the agency. She said in a statement:

The Secretary challenged department leaders to rethink the way the Department of Education operates so that we can better serve students and use taxpayer funds more wisely. That has required a lot of change over the last year, which

can be difficult for some. The changes we've undertaken already, and will continue to make into next year, will ultimately lead to the Department becoming more efficient, effective, and accountable — which makes it a better place to work.

Over the past year, career department employees have privately complained about DeVos's leadership, saying their expertise has been ignored by her political appointees to top jobs. And they have expressed opposition to many of the positions she has taken. DeVos rolled back Obama-era civil rights protections for some marginalized students and made it easier for for-profit colleges to operate. DeVos has also limited the ability of employees to work from home and fought with the department's union.

The report, released Wednesday by the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service and the management consulting firm Boston Consulting Group, shows that morale fell at nearly 60 percent of federal agencies from 2017 to 2018. It provides results from the first full year of the Trump administration and is a clear rebuke by federal employees of its policies and attitudes toward them.

Most of the declines were far smaller than what was found at the Education Department, though morale among the workforce at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau fell by 25.2 percentage points. At the Export-Import Bank of the United States, it declined 18.1 percentage points, and at the National Labor Relations Board, the measure of worker morale declined 12.6 percentage points.

The morale drops are hardly a surprise, given the hostility that Trump and many of his appointees have directed toward the agencies and their missions. DeVos has said she wouldn't mind if the department closed, expressing her long-standing opposition to federal involvement in local education.

Keep Our PACT Act would ensure education is a priority in federal budget

NEA urges Congress to put students ahead of politics by passing vital education funding bill

WASHINGTON - December 06, 2018 -

U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland) introduced the Keep Our PACT Act into Congress, which would create a 10-year mandatory glide path to fully fund both Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that could help ensure education is a priority in the federal budget. The bill is supported by the [National Education Association](#), which represents 3 million educators working in America's public schools, colleges and universities.

The following statement can be attributed to [NEA President Lily Eskelsen García](#):

“The National Education Association has been steadfast in its mission that that all students deserve early learning opportunities, classes small enough for one-on-one attention, modern tools and textbooks, and community support services. We thank Senator Van Hollen for his leadership and introducing the Keep Our PACT Act that makes student opportunity a federal budget priority, especially when it comes to the targeted investments in education programs designed to help students in poverty, children with disabilities and those who are most in need.

“Voters made it clear that they believe our schools need more resources. Congress always has fallen short on funding Title I and IDEA, but we believe the momentum is building to correct these shortfalls — and this bill proves it. We urge Congress to put students, educators and working families ahead of politics and pass the Keep Our PACT Act because it provides opportunities to all students.”



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you a restful break!

~ HAPPY ~
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