



RSA NEWS YOU CAN USE FEDERAL AND STATE UPDATE

Today, in addition to discussing tomorrow's requirement that everyone wear masks in public when they're unable to sufficiently distance themselves from others, the governor announced that New York State's "pause" will continue until May 15th. Presumably that means that school buildings will remain closed until at least that time. It is difficult to imagine how businesses would restart and schools would not be part of the planning, given the childcare issues that would be raised. Cuomo has repeatedly focused on the fact that while rates are stable and slightly declining, that could change abruptly without continuing our current safety protocols. If business and travel sanctions were to ease and schools reconvened, there is a strong likelihood that the virus would rapidly spread to areas currently experiencing a low rate of infection. The governor has highlighted his regional efforts with surrounding states and those states are taking a cautious approach to reopening schools.

Meanwhile, on the federal level, the president's advisors today urged him to reopen businesses nationwide; tomorrow. The "disconnect" between state caution and federal abandon is profound.

Congressional staff is considering additional aid measures while Congress is substantially in recess until May 4th (the Senate is meeting for one day to confirm federal judiciary appointments.) Here are some of the measures being discussed:

The first proposal is for more emergency relief ("CARES 1.5") as opposed to the full Phase 4 package

- The 4th package is on a longer time horizon.
 - Most of the conversation is happening on the House side; likely taking their original proposal and adding to it
 - Members want to have a say in these bills and don't just want leadership doing it on their own. This obviously adds to the time needed to craft the legislation
 - As a result, the 4th package likely won't happen until members are back in May
- RSA is part of a large education coalition called the Education Big Table. Here is some of the advocacy we are doing through that organization:
 - We have circulated a letter highlighting the need for state stabilization funds and having the money going into Title I and IDEA directly. Within the proposed language would be a
 - \$175 billion ask for funding for school districts

- \$2 billion for E-Rate
- Doubling of current funding levels for Title I and IDEA (\$25 billion)
- Schools to serve as community centers, healthcare clinics, overflow centers, feeding students, etc.
- Beyond the financial request, we are focusing on the inequities that COVID has uncovered that should be addressed in the recovery phase of the crisis. For instance, the last time the federal government provided aid, the drop off in total funding was profound as states failed to make up the gap (hence the Gap Elimination Adjustment restoration, which took years and left fiscally challenged schools decidedly behind their suburban counterparts.) Low-income schools will again be most hurt by this because they rely most on state funds. We need to learn the lesson of the stimulus money falling off after 2011. As noted in the last alert, RSA has also sent a letter and had staff discussions requesting direct aid to districts (to Sens. Schumer and Gillibrand.)
- Keeping equity at the forefront as we move into the post-virus era will be critically important. Schools will not look the same after this crisis and New York's rural schools could benefit significantly from the new approach. For instance, digital learning methods and opportunities, as well as access have been highlighted as being tremendously disparate between regions of the state. The lack of aid in the future could well lead to greater latitude in school structure, such as regional high schools or high schools attached to community colleges or SUNY campuses.

Stay safe and healthy, friends and as always, thank you so very much for all of your heroic efforts on behalf of our rural students!

Dave

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