



DAILY BRIEFING

Monday, February 7, 2022

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Weekly Rundown

The NCHER Weekly Rundown, which includes the latest information on important events in Washington, DC, is available today and can be downloaded from the [NCHER website](#).

House and Senate Appropriations Committees Leaders Introduce Short-Term CR, Extends Federal Funding Until March 11

Today, House and Senate Appropriations Committees leaders introduced the [Further Additional Extending Government Funding Act](#), which would extend the current short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) that keeps the federal government in operation until March 11. The current CR expires next Friday, February 18, 2022. The new legislation gives House and Senate Committee leaders an additional three weeks to complete bipartisan, bicameral negotiations on a Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations package. “Our country needs a government funding agreement to create good-paying jobs, grow opportunity for the middle class, and protect our national security,” House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro said in a [statement](#). “We are close to reaching a framework government funding agreement, but we will need additional time to complete the legislation in full. This Continuing Resolution – the product of bipartisan, bicameral negotiation – extends funding through March 11 to keep government up and running while Congress completes our important work.”

The House and Senate are expected to pass the short-term CR this week before current federal funding runs out. The measure is the third CR that Congress has taken up since the fiscal year began in October 2021 as leaders have struggled to lock in a bipartisan compromise that sets federal spending totals for the year. For additional coverage, see this article from [The Hill](#).

Department of Education Releases Updates to College Scorecard

Today, the U.S Department of Education released an update to the [College Scorecard](#), which tracks college statistics including post-graduation earnings, student loan debt, and loan repayment rates. The scorecard is intended to help students compare their college options to make better higher education consumer decisions. The update restores institution-level earnings and comparison points that were not calculated under the Trump Administration, and includes an annual refresh of the cumulative loan debt of student borrowers at an institution and by fields of study and student loan repayment rates. “The updated and enhanced College Scorecard shines a spotlight on affordability, inclusivity, and outcomes, over exclusivity and colleges that leave students without good

jobs and with mountains of debt,” Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said in a [press release](#). For further coverage, see this article from [The Hill](#).

Higher Education Groups Send Letter to Congress Urging Investment in Pell Grants

Last week, more than 180 higher education organizations wrote a [letter](#) to the Congressional leadership urging them to double the maximum award for the Pell Grant program as it works to reach a bipartisan budget agreement for Fiscal Year 2022. The organizations argue that Pell Grants allow more than seven million low- and middle-income students to attend and complete college, but the share of college costs covered by the program is at an all-time low. They say that the doubling the Pell Grant would significantly reduce or eliminate low-income students’ need to borrow and a strong Pell Grant is critical to ensuring that students from all financial backgrounds can participate and grow a strong, diverse economy. Separately, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) also sent a letter to Congress urging lawmakers to increase funding to Hispanic Serving Institutions as they work to finalize the budget agreement. “Congress needs to make the necessary investments to restore the purchasing power of the Pell and allow for the full coverage of college costs, including books and rent,” HACU wrote.

House Passes America COMPETES Act, Includes Short-Term Pell Grants and College Transparency Act

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed [H.R.4521, the America COMPETES Act](#), by a vote of 220-210. Before final passage, the House adopted an [amendment](#) authored by Reps. Andy Levin (D-MI), Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH), and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), that amends the Higher Education Act to broaden Pell Grant eligibility to shorter-term programs and requires the U.S. Department of Education to establish a data system aimed at improving postsecondary student academic and economic outcomes. The amendment, which passed by a vote of 238-193, was modeled after a combination of the [College Transparency Act](#) and [the Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students](#). The America COMPETES Act was passed later in the day by a vote of 222 to 210. The legislation now heads to a conference committee to work out the disagreements between the House version and the Senate-passed [United States Innovation and Competition Act](#).

For further coverage, see these articles from [Roll Call](#) and [Inside Higher Ed](#).

Ninth Circuit: Former Secretary DeVos Cannot Be Ordered to Testify in Borrower Defense to Repayment Case

Last week, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit issued an [opinion](#) that former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos could not be forced to testify in a class action lawsuit challenging the U.S. Department of Education's borrower defense to repayment policies. The lawsuit is being brought on behalf of roughly 160,000 borrowers who applied to the Department for loan forgiveness. The opinion overturns an order from a federal judge last May who said former Secretary DeVos must testify because "exceptional circumstances" justified the rare deposition of a former Cabinet secretary. The Ninth Circuit concluded the reasoning that cautions against making high-ranking executive branch officials answer questions in court still applies in this case. "The district court erred in allowing DeVos's deposition because the information sought from DeVos, while perhaps relevant, was not essential to the claims alleged by plaintiffs," Judge Milan Smith wrote. "The panel held that there was no indication that DeVos held information that was essential to plaintiffs' case or that it was otherwise unobtainable."

Federal Reserve Finds Consumer Credit Increased by 5 Percent in December, But Student Loan Balances Decreased Last Quarter

Today, the Federal Reserve released its monthly [Consumer Credit - G.19 Report](#), which found that consumer credit increased 5.9 percent in 2021, and increased at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.1 percent in December 2021. Revolving credit, consisting mostly of credit card debt, increased at an annual rate of 6.6 percent, while nonrevolving credit, consisting mostly of auto loans and student loans, increased at an annual rate of 5.7 percent. Total outstanding consumer credit stood at \$4.431 trillion at the end of December, up by \$18.9 billion from the previous month. The report states that federal and private student loan balances total \$1.749 trillion at the end of the fourth quarter, a reduction of about \$1.8 billion from the third quarter. For further coverage, see this article from [MarketWatch](#).

U.S. Department of Education News

For today's *Federal Register*, click [here](#).

The following announcement was posted to Federal Student Aid's Knowledge Center

website:

- [\(ANN-21-11\) Updated Course Offerings - 2021-22 Learning Tracks \(Updated Feb. 4, 2022\)](#)
 - [\(CB-22-06\) Application for Participation in the Work Colleges Program](#)
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Member News



The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority released its [Financial Aid Tip for Students - February 2022](#), which says that students looking for money to help pay for technical training or college classes should take advantage of free online scholarship searches.

General News

[The Hill](#) reports that First Lady Jill Biden told attendees at a conference put on by the American Association of Community Colleges that free community college will not be in the final version of the Build Back Better Act.

[Forbes](#) publishes an article on how student and parent borrowers should prepare for the restart of student loan payments.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that, in their State of the State addresses, Governors have signaled higher education will be a priority in the next fiscal year. So far, their budget proposals back that up.

[Forbes](#) publishes an article on federal student loan debt cancellation and examines what will happen next if the President cancels student loan debt.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that some colleges and universities have started financial aid programs to cover extra costs that students face, from a winter coat to computers.

[University Business](#) reports that reaching struggling students before they know they have a problem is key to “academic advocacy,” an emerging high touch advising model that prioritizes retention and completion.

[Fox Business](#) reports on the seven top ways to get out of student loan debt and ways that borrowers can better manage their debt so it will pay off sooner.

[Fox 5 Atlanta](#) reports that federal student loan payments are set to resume on May 1, after more than two years of COVID-19 emergency forbearance. However, most Americans believe that the payment pause should be extended until 2023, according to a new poll from Data for Progress.

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