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# DAILY BRIEFING

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**Tuesday, June 22, 2021**

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## News Reports: Kvaal Nomination Reportedly Being Stalled in Senate by Democrat

Yesterday, several news outlets reported that the nomination of James Kvaal to serve as the next Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education has been stalled in the U.S. Senate. While the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee advanced his nomination in April 2021 with bipartisan support, a vote by the full Senate is being held up by an unnamed Democrat who is pushing the Biden Administration to move forward with broad student loan debt cancellation. For more coverage, see this article from [Inside Higher Ed](#).

## Foxx, Smith Send Letter to Department of Education on How Colleges and Universities are Spending COVID Funds

Today, House Education and Labor Committee Ranking Member Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and House Budget Committee Ranking Member Jason Smith (R-MO) sent a [letter](#) to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona requesting information around the federal funds issued by the U.S. Department of Education to elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter also expresses concerns with recent guidance affecting federal financial assistance for higher education students and the “lack of oversight into how K-12 and higher education institutions are wastefully spending COVID-19 relief funds.” It also discusses the Biden Administration’s decision to overturn former President Donald Trump’s policy and allowing undocumented students to access emergency grant aid sent to colleges and universities. “This administration is pursuing America last policies that will lead to federal bankruptcy, learning loss, mental health decline for students, and privileges for non-citizens on the taxpayer’s dime,” Ranking Member Foxx said in a [press release](#). “I hope Secretary Cardona will allow for proper oversight by thoroughly responding to our request and, ultimately, commit to building an in-person education system that works for those who legally live and work here.”

## AEI Releases New Report on Changing Incentives Between Education and Employment

The American Enterprise Institute recently released a report titled, [Using the Right Incentives to Link Education and Employment: Market-Based Proposals to Refocus the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Finance](#). The report highlighted three key points:

- The higher education system does not work well for taxpayers, students, or higher education institutions.
- The Higher Education Act reauthorization should ensure student aid supports those who need it the most and directs them to useful, skill-based educational pathways that will prepare them to contribute positively to society.
- There is a burgeoning opportunity to realign the nation’s higher education laws with Americans’ desire to get the education they need for a brighter future. To do this, policymakers should incentivize outcomes and recognize the blurry line between “higher education” and “workforce development.”

The report provides ideas for conservatives to consider in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, including reducing credential inflation and promoting skills-based hiring; protecting students and taxpayers when institutions close suddenly; an auction-driven alternative to short-term Pell Grants; and full-ride Pell Grants.

## U.S. Department of Education News

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

### General News

[The Wall Street Journal](#) reports that the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the legal standards for borrowers to eliminate student loan debt through bankruptcy, a setback for consumer advocates who are pressing the Biden Administration, Congress, and the courts to find ways to alleviate the student-debt crisis.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports on the first day of the hearings held by the U.S. Department of Education on topics under consideration for upcoming negotiated rulemaking sessions. Commenters addressed topics related to federal student aid, including Public Service Loan Forgiveness, widespread debt cancellation, and the responsibility of for-profit institutions.

[Diverse Issues in Higher Education](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), and [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) report that, in a unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) citing their restrictions on education-based benefits for student athletes as "unlawful."

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) continues to update its list of colleges and universities that will require students or employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

[Yahoo Finance](#) takes a look at Americans' student loan debt by state.

[Fox Business](#) reports on what to know when looking at student loan interest rates.

[KNOE News 8](#) reports that scammers are trying to create confusion when it comes to student loan forgiveness plans and the red flags to watch for.

[KPVI News](#) reports that a new Debt.com survey reveals that almost one in three Americans who fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA struggle doing so. The biggest challenge, 44 percent said, was not knowing all the financial information that the FAFSA asked for, while the second-biggest challenge was not having any help filling it out, 28 percent said.

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