ADVOCACY UPDATE

CCCAOE
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION FOR OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

Legislative Update from Austin Webster - Principal | W Strategies LLC

September saw a flurry of activity in both California and Washington, DC as the State Legislature wrapped up their official business for the 2021 legislative year, Governor Gavin Newsom successfully survived a recall election, and the US House and Senate concluded their mark-up of the proposed $3.5 trillion budget reconciliation package.

The California State Assembly and Senate closed out the first year of legislative session on September 10th. Legislators advanced nearly 1000 pieces of legislation in the closing weeks and passed a series of “Budget Jr” bills to tighten up the state’s revenue picture for the remainder of the fiscal year. While these measures await the Governor’s signature or veto, members, staff, and advocates will now turn their attention to planning for next year.

The Governor, who handedly defeated a recall on September 14th, has 30 days to act on legislation presented to him. He is currently considering a wide variety of bills, ranging from housing reform and streamlining to healthcare expansion and environmental protection. We are closely watching several key bills on the Governor’s desk that would have direct impacts to our colleges. AB 928 (Berman) would make substantial changes to the transfer process between two- and four-year institutions in the state and advanced through the legislature despite broad opposition from practitioners. AB 1273 (Rodriguez) would make changes to the approval of accreditors based on their acceptance of earn and learn opportunities for students. Although CCCAOE and the Chancellor’s Office worked to remove potentially harmful components of the bill, it remains to be seen if the Governor’s Office will sign the measure into law. Lastly, AB 927 (Medina) would expand the statewide baccalaureate degree program, removing the cap on the number of colleges that may offer a program and extending the operative time of the pilot.

In Washington, DC, the Congress has held several days of mark-up on the proposed $3.5 trillion budget reconciliation plan. If passed, the proposal would allocate billions of dollars to public education, financial aid, and workforce development programs. These funds would be in addition to the nearly $1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure deal that is currently pending action in the House of Representatives. Democratic Leadership has indicated that the reconciliation plan and the infrastructure deal would be acted on concurrently and imposed an internal deadline of September 27th for a vote on both measures. While moderate Democrats in the Senate and Congressional Republicans have voiced concerns over the budget proposal, the White House and Speaker’s Office have indicated that they believe both can be passed by the end of the month.

If a budget deal is not reached by September 30th, the federal government will run out of money and be forced to shutdown pending the passage of another continuing resolution. The political dynamics are made more complicated by the need to act on the debt ceiling, an issue that is almost guaranteed to result in a partisan showdown on the Hill.

CCCAOE continues to monitor and engage at both the state and federal level. For the latest information on the legislation or budget negotiations, be sure to stop by the “This is Politics” session during the annual conference in Palm Springs. If you are interested in participating on our Advocacy Committee or want to learn more about how you can be a part of our advocacy efforts, contact your Regional Vice President.