

Virginia State PTA Update on Federal Education Funding and Policy: From the February 4th, 2025 Report to PTA Officers

Threats to Dismantle the US Department of Education

President Trump is threatening to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education by executive order and/or greatly diminish the important role it serves.

His campaign talking point was to "return education to the states", however, local school boards and state governments already run public schools, not the federal government.

This concept has been campaigned on by many Republicans, however, because the Education Department was created by Congress, only Congress can eliminate it, and it would require a filibuster-proof supermajority (60 person) vote in the US Senate, meaning at least 7 Democrats would need to vote for the proposal.

The US Department of Education provides important data collection and reporting on education spending and student achievement. They foster high academic standards, hold states accountable for failure to comply with IDEA (as we've seen in Virginia), provide targeted funding for schools in high-poverty areas, and fund improvements in schools that are identified as underperforming. The US Department of Education also oversees the \$1.6 trillion federal student loan program and sets rules for what colleges must do to participate. They are also charged with enforcing civil rights laws that ban discrimination in federally funded schools on the basis of race, sex and other factors. Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota in the Senate sponsor of the [Returning Education to Our States Act](#), which would abolish the US Department of Education and shift the disbursement of funds to the Department of the Treasury, and move civil rights enforcement to the Justice Department.

Public schools in Virginia received 12% of their funding from the federal government.

During the 2022-23 school year, Virginia's public schools received \$2.4 billion, or **\$1,918 in federal funds per student**, according to the Superintendent's Annual Report. In fiscal year 2024 this included \$547M for the National School Lunch Program; \$346M for Special Education, and \$327M for Title 1 grants that support students living in poverty, just to name a few critical programs that will be impacted should the US Department of Education be diminished or dismantled.

TAKE ACTION >> WRITE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR *(see the sample letter above)*

Parents have been consistent and clear about our expectation for a high-quality education system, and that includes having a fully functioning federal education agency to oversee all aspects of education and prepare students for a globally competitive workforce.

National Vouchers

Giving Public School Funds to Private School Families

Last week President Trump signed an executive order entitled "*Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families*," which directs the Department of Health and Human Services to issue guidance within the next 90 days that explains how states can redirect public education block grants funds to faith-based and private schools. These block grants normally provide fund programs for low-income families and special education students as well improve student learning conditions.

FOCUS ON VIRGINIA

Over the past few months national private-school activists have publicly stated they are targeting Virginia as the next state where they want to win passage of a voucher (aka "school choice") program. Their activists are being told to advertise "choice" to our low-income families with the promise of improved student outcomes at private schools.

At the state level this session we saw vouchers wrapped in the slick marketing term of "opportunity scholarships" alongside statements that students are under-performing on standardized tests. We've also seen state legislators vote against long overdue state funding for public schools and then vote to give-away limited public school dollars to private school families.

There is no data that proves private schools are more effective at improving student achievement. In fact, private schools can hand-pick which students they admit to influence their test results, and they have no mandated requirement to provide transparent spending, share their curriculum with parents, or demonstrate student achievement.

Voucher programs are a straight government handout to a select few private school families that directly reduces education funding that would otherwise provide public schools with supplemental resources to improve education for low-income families and special education students and/or keep our schools and students safe.

Funding allocated by Governor Youngkin for a Virginia based Voucher programs was removed from the Virginia House and Senate Budget over the weekend! Collective action is still needed to protect public schools funding at the federal level.

- [PTA Position Statement on Public School Choice](#)
- [PPTA Position Statement on Public Charter Schools](#)
- [Fact Sheets from the National Coalition for Public Education](#)

>> TAKE ACTION

- WRITE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR! (Sample letter above)
- [Share PTA's Take Action Alert opposing a national voucher program](#)

Immigration Enforcement at School

The new administration has issued several recent policy decisions that allow immigration officers and agents to carry out enforcement actions—including arrests and searches—of undocumented immigrants in schools.

We know this has created anxiety for our communities across the commonwealth, particularly for our PTAs with high ratios of undocumented students - all of which are lawfully entitled to a high-quality and free public K-12 education under the Supreme Court's 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* decision.

We have been in touch with the Virginia Association of School Superintendents and Virginia Principal Associations who are quickly preparing policies and procedures for school divisions that protect access to student data, and create clear policies and protocols if ICE were to visit your school. We are also concerned about how the higher chronic absenteeism weights could be used against schools who may have students avoiding school out of fear of immigration enforcement.

As a reminder:

- Federal law enforcement officers must have a judicial warrant to enter school property
- Parent consent is needed before law enforcement officers can speak with a student.
- Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), school districts must maintain the confidentiality of all personally identifiable student information.
- Please be mindful that families may not want attention drawn to them or their students

PTA is committed to ensuring every child feels safe, supported, and included in our schools. The current [PTA Position Statement on Rights and Services for Undocumented Children](#) is eight years old and under review by National PTA's legislation committee.

>> TAKE ACTION

- **Ask your Principal** to share your school's ICE response protocol at your next PTA meeting.
- Share guidance on [developing family preparedness plans](#).

Proposal to Tax Non-Profits

Our federal tax-exempt status is at risk. Since last year, influential policy think tanks have called for taxing all tax-exempt organizations across the board, applying the 21% corporate tax rate to all non-donation net revenue. This would include taxing non-profits, like PTAs, on their membership dues, sponsorships, investment income, and educational program revenue.

What's going on -- Sweeping tax breaks established in Trump's 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act are set to expire in 2025. The 2017 law cut the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21% (which does not expire), capped deductions for state and local taxes (SALT) at \$10,000, doubled individual standard deductions, and expanded the child tax credit.

Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle have called for the 2025 tax package to be funded at a cost of \$3-4 trillion. While campaigning Trump indicated he wanted to further reduce the corporate tax rate to 15% for companies that make their products in America, and eliminate taxes on tipped wages, overtime, and Social Security payments.

To continue the existing tax cuts and add new tax cuts House tax writers have said that the cost of tax cuts could result in tax hikes that target specific sectors, like non-profits.

TAKE ACTION >>

PTA has passed a new **Position Statement on the Taxation of Nonprofits** opposing any changes to tax policy that would increase the tax burden on registered nonprofit groups. We encourage you to write to your federal legislator.

The American Society of Association Executives and numerous non-profits have formed a 'Community Impact Coalition' to ensure lawmakers understand the value of 501(c) organizations and provide coordinated advocacy against proposals that would eliminate non-profit tax-exempt status.