



The Education Report

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The Education Report, a weekly publication of BPAG, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American education. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

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1. Budget and Appropriations

The federal government remains shut down today, Friday, November 7, with the impasse now stretching into the longest on record, however Senate leaders have kept the chamber in an unusual Friday session amid signs of a potential breakthrough. (The House hasn't met since September 19th.) Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) has floated a new framework aimed at reopening the government: pass a short-term, "clean" funding bill to end the shutdown now, and then take up Democrats' healthcare demands separately. "Enough is enough," Thune said on the floor recently, pressing Democrats to accept a nonpartisan CR so "we can get back to work for the American people." A Friday vote is expected in the Senate as leaders test appetite for his approach.

SNAP—the country's largest anti-hunger program—has become the most immediate shutdown flash point. After the administration first said it would pay only part of November benefits using limited reserves, federal courts ordered full funding; the Justice Department is appealing while states scramble to implement payments. Governors have turned up the pressure: Michigan's Gretchen Whitmer (D) and a coalition of 21 governors urged the White House to "prevent disruption" to SNAP, while Iowa's Kim Reynolds (R) activated a state plan to bolster food banks, saying, "Together, we can make an even bigger difference for our neighbors who need help during this time." Senate attempts to mandate full federal SNAP funding hit partisan roadblocks this week, underscoring how food aid and shutdown politics are now tightly intertwined.

This week's Election Day results added new political gravity. Democrats notched prominent wins in New Jersey, Virginia and New York City—results party strategists argued strengthened their hand to insist on a one-year extension of Affordable Care Act subsidies as part of any reopening deal. President Trump, by contrast, faulted the shutdown for hurting Republicans' image and urged the Senate GOP to break the stalemate—though most Republicans resisted changing Senate filibuster rules, despite the president's demands. "All Republicans have to do is say yes," Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said Friday as he offered the one-year subsidy

extension in tandem with reopening the government; Thune and most Republicans pushed back, arguing policy talks should follow a reopening rather than precede it.

What happens next? Leader Thune has the Senate in for a rare Friday session, with leaders signaling weekend work if votes are close. House leaders, meanwhile, have not committed to returning next week. Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) has tied the House's return to Senate action and lawmakers will be eager to be home for at least the start of next week to mark Veterans Day. The coming holidays, announcements regarding limits on flights to keep the skies safe and the aggregate effects of limited public services and absent paychecks give some hope of a resolution "soon."

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2. In Brief

COURT BLOCKS USDA CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR NOVEMBER SNAP BENEFITS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [announced in an October 24, 2025 memo](#) that it will not use emergency contingency funds to cover Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for November 2025, affecting about 41 million Americans as the federal government shutdown prevents Congress from funding the program. [The memo](#) explained that the roughly \$5 billion contingency fund is "not legally available" for regular monthly benefits because it can only supplement appropriated funds when those are insufficient. Since no fiscal 2026 appropriation exists—"Due to Congressional Democrats' refusal to pass a clean continuing resolution"—the USDA says it cannot legally access those funds. USDA stated the contingency funds must be reserved for emergencies, particularly the Disaster SNAP program, which aids residents affected by hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. The memo also rejected shifting money from other nutrition programs, noting that Child Nutrition Programs have already transferred \$23 billion from Section 32 tariff funds to sustain operations, which are also temporarily supporting the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). However, [two federal judges on Friday ordered the Trump administration to use emergency money](#) to keep SNAP going. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent suggested that SNAP benefits could restart as soon as Wednesday after a court orders release of the funds. "There's a process that has to be followed, so we've got to figure out what the process is," Bessent said yesterday on CNN's "State of the Union."

SENATE HELP COMMITTEE EXAMINES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS

On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee [held a hearing](#) on registered apprenticeship programs, where senators examined how slow federal and state registration, excessive compliance paperwork, limited reciprocity, and unstable project funding hinder workforce development in healthcare, manufacturing, and infrastructure. Lawmakers emphasized the value of apprenticeships, noting that starting salaries for registered apprentices average \$80,000 and that the U.S. could face two million unfilled manufacturing jobs by 2030. Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) highlighted Alabama's employer-driven nursing apprenticeship model, praising partnerships between hospitals, state licensing boards, and colleges that provide "last-dollar" scholarships and connect education to workforce needs. Bipartisan members—including Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)—warned that uncertainty surrounding federal initiatives like the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law undermines employer confidence, cancels projects, and disrupts apprenticeship

pipelines. Witnesses and senators alike called for modernizing occupational codes, streamlining compliance, and incentivizing state-college partnerships over rigid federal mandates. They cited burdensome accreditation rules and outdated paperwork as particular obstacles in construction and manufacturing. Wraparound supports such as childcare, scholarships, and competency-based learning received bipartisan attention, as did concerns about Medicaid cuts reducing nursing home staffing and limiting apprenticeship opportunities. Through questioning from Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), the committee debated the roles of government and the private sector in job creation but agreed on the need for long-term investment, stable funding, and stronger coordination between industry and education. Members concluded that high-quality apprenticeships require clear standards, efficient registration, and durable partnerships to create adaptable, high-wage pathways in a changing economy.

SENATE HELP COMMITTEE EXPLORES COLLEGE COST TRANSPARENCY

On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on “Reforming Financial Transparency in Higher Education.” Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) focused on the need for clearer, comparable information about net price, program outcomes, and institutional spending so families can make informed choices. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) agreed on the importance of transparency but emphasized that affordability and student basic needs—such as housing, food, and childcare—remain pressing challenges, warning that transparency alone will not solve rising costs. Justin Draeger (Strada Education Foundation) urged standardizing financial-aid offers, pairing price with program-level outcomes, allowing safe harbors for collaborative pricing experiments, and providing earlier cost estimates. Brenda Hicks (Southwestern College) described her school’s tailored aid letters and supported a balance between consistent definitions and institutional flexibility, recommending better net-price calculators and clearer program labeling. Preston Cooper (American Enterprise Institute) argued that opaque pricing drives tuition growth and called for binding net-price estimates, standardized aid offers, and detailed outcome data to improve accountability. Onjila Odeneal (Detroit Promise) and Mark Huelsman (Hope Center for Student Basic Needs) emphasized that transparency must be matched by real affordability and wraparound supports, citing widespread food and housing insecurity and the declining purchasing power of Pell Grants. Senators questioned witnesses on potential solutions, including standardized aid letters, improved net-price tools, expanded dual-enrollment and transfer pathways, and preserving programs such as Public Service Loan Forgiveness. The hearing closed with bipartisan consensus on improving access to clear, usable information for students, though lawmakers diverged on whether reforms should rely on federal regulation, institutional flexibility, or market-based incentives.

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3. New Publications

Voices from the Field: 2025 Program Survey

National Girls Collaborative Project (October 31, 2025)

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4. In the News

Education Department Ordered to Reinstate Mental Health Grants

Higher Ed Dive (October 31, 2025)

Trump Administration Is Sued Over Student Loan Forgiveness Changes
The Washington Post (November 3, 2025)

Child Care Providers Run for Office to Fix a Broken System
The 74 Million (November 3, 2025)

Trump Partially Funds SNAP as Colleges Scramble to Feed Students
Inside Higher Ed (November 3, 2025)

‘End of an Era’: Experts Warn Research Executive Order Could Stifle Scientific Innovation
Higher Ed Dive (November 3, 2025)

The Shutdown Is Hurting Schools Whose Budgets Are Mostly Federal Money
U.S. News (November 5, 2025)

Why Shifting Special Ed Oversight Could Be ‘A Public Education Crisis’
K-12 Dive (November 6, 2025)

Indiana Attorney General’s Lawsuit Alleges Indianapolis Public Schools Hindered ICE
Chalkbeat (November 6, 2025)

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5. About BPAG

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