

# The Federal Update for January 27, 2023

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Re: Federal Update

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## News

### House Republicans Announce Education Committee Members

The Republican Party announced their roster for the House Committee on Education and Workforce this week, including some new members who did not serve on the Committee during the 117th Congress.

The overall makeup of the House Committee on Education and Workforce will be smaller in the 118th Congress compared to the prior one, with a reduction of four members on each side of the aisle. Republicans announced 23 of their allotted 25 members this week, and Democrats will have a total of 20 seats. Ten Republican committee members from the 117th Congress will not return to their role, either due to moving to another committee or no longer being a Member of Congress.

“The work of the Committee on Education and the Workforce touches every stage of Americans’ lives… I am excited to see such a strong crop of Members join this Committee for the 118th Congress; they will bring invaluable insight and real-world experience to the table,” Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC) said in a statement after announcing the committee roster.

Of the Republican members announced this week, 14 are returning to the Committee after previously serving, while nine are new to the Committee. Democrats have not yet announced their committee members but are expected to as soon as this week.

Resources:

Bianca Quilantan, “Meet the Republicans on House Education and Labor,” *Politico*, January 25, 2023.

Author: KSC

### Cardona Announces New Initiative

In a speech this week, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona laid out the U.S. Department of Education’s priorities for 2023. The speech highlighted funding provided to school districts by Congress through the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Cardona urged States and districts to move forward ensuring that education provides excellent results for students no matter their background through the “Raise the Bar: Lead the World” plan.

Among the key pillars of the new initiative are:

* Achieving academic excellence by accelerating learning and providing a rigorous education for all students;
* Improving learning conditions by eliminating educator shortages and investing in student mental health; and
* Creating pathways for global engagement through college and career pathways and multilingualism.

“Education opens doors,” Cardona said in his speech. “As a student, as a teacher, school principal, and as a parent, I’ve seen firsthand the way it transforms lives.  That’s why, when we talk about the future of education, I could not believe more strongly that we have to Raise the Bar. We have what it takes to lead the world in education, but it will take the collective will to challenge complacency and status quo in education and focus on substance, not sensationalism.  Working together, I know we can do it.”

During his speech this week, Cardona also committed to staying on as Secretary of Education through the remainder of President Biden’s current term.

Cardona’s [full speech is available here](https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/remarks-us-secretary-education-miguel-cardona-raise-bar-lead-world).

Author: JCM

### IES Announces Plan for New Data Collection

The U.S. Department of Education’s Institute for Education Sciences (IES) announced a new project last week aimed at identifying and scaling up effective practices to help students with academic recovery from the pandemic. The new initiative is called Leveraging Evidence to Accelerate Recovery Nationwide (LEARN).

In an interview with the publication *Education Week*, IES Director Mark Schneider said that the goal is to move rapidly to evaluate new plans and replicate activities that work in different demographic groups and geographic areas, rather than running longer-term serial contracts.

The current awards for the LEARN network involve four organizations running pilot programs on topics like peer-assisted learning strategies, targeted reading instruction, and class-wide math interventions. A scaling lead, that also received an award, will help to facilitate training, coaching, and collaboration activities with product teams and, if pilots are successful, provide a model for the field.

More [information on the new IES project is available here](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/program.asp?ID=2123).

Resources:

Sarah D. Sparks, “ED’s Research Chief: We Don’t Understand Our Most Struggling Learners,” *Education Week*, January 19, 2023.

Author: JCM

## Reports

### ED OIG Releases Report on University’s Use of HEERF Funds

This month, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Inspector General (ED OIG) released an audit report on the University of Cincinnati’s use of Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF). The report is indicative of ED OIG’s focus on providing oversight of pandemic relief funds. The audit covered a year and a half period between 2020 and 2021 and included a review of the University’s HEERF grants under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and American Rescue Plan (ARP).

In determining whether the University used funds for allowable and intended purposes, ED OIG found that the University needs to increase the processes for review and documentation related to grant funds and that the University was not compliant with some federal cash management and reporting requirements. Specifically, ED OIG found that, among other things, the University (i) did not have effective processes to prevent and detect payment errors under the CARES Act; (ii) did not comply with federal cost principles for its noncompetitive procurements; and (iii) reported $4.1 million in scholarships awards in the wrong expenditure category. The report also notes that the University maintained the unspent CARES Act funds in a temporary investment pool (TIP) and remitted imputed rather than earned interest.

ED OIG made a series of recommendations to the University to address the errors. First, ED OIG recommended that the University be required to implement bolstered review processes and new policies and procedures to prevent errors in awarding funds related to emergency grants for students, as well as to ensure appropriate documentation is maintained. Additionally, OIG suggested that ED review allowability of the University’s noncompetitive procurements and require the University to remit unsupportive costs back to ED. Further, OIG recommended that ED require the University to develop policies and procedures around the use of HEERF funds and incorporate federal cash management requirements. Finally, OIG recommended that ED require the University to return $35,439 in earnings on the advance of the CARES Act Student Aid grant funds.

The report indicates that while the University did not specify whether it agreed with the findings, it did agree with all of the recommendations, except the recommendation to remit earnings on the advance of CARES Act funds. The University argues that the funds were invested in a security money market fund and that it did not earn $35,439, as calculated by ED OIG. However, ED OIG determined that the University did not provide sufficient evidence that the funds were deposited in a TIP with a secure money market fund and that the funds were comingled with other federal and non-federal funds.

[The full audit report is available here](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/auditrpts/universityofcincinnati-report.pdf).

Author: BNT

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