

From: Honeysett, Adam <Adam.Honeysett@ED.GOV>
To: ED_REVIEW@LISTSERV.ED.GOV ED_REVIEW@LISTSERV.ED.GOV
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PARKLAND SCHOOL SHOOTING

This week, responding to the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the White House issued a [fact sheet](#) outlining President Trump's "immediate actions to secure our schools."

Hardening Our Schools

- The Administration will assist states to train specially qualified school personnel on a voluntary basis. [Department of Justice](#) (DOJ) assistance programs will be leveraged to enable schools to partner with state and local law enforcement to provide firearms training for school personnel. The Administration will support the transition of military veterans and retired law enforcement into new careers in education.
- The Administration will encourage states' Attorneys General to audit school district compliance with state emergency preparedness activities.
- Federal agencies, including the [Department of Homeland Security](#) (DHS), will partner with states and localities to support a public awareness campaign, modeled on "See Something, Say Something," to encourage awareness and reporting of suspicious activity.

Strengthening Background Checks and Prevention

- The Administration is calling on every state to adopt Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs). The President is directing DOJ to provide technical assistance to states, at their request, on establishing and carrying out ERPOs. ERPOs allow law enforcement, with approval from a court, to remove firearms from individuals who are a demonstrated threat to themselves or others and temporarily prevent individuals from purchasing new firearms.
- The President supports the legislative framework, introduced by U.S. Senators John Cornyn and Chris Murphy, to hold federal agencies more accountable for reporting information to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and incentivize states to improve their reporting to the system.
- The President also supports the *STOP School Violence Act*, which provides for state-based grants to implement evidence-based violence prevention programs.
- The Administration requests Congress provide funding in 2018 to jump-start implementation of evidence based programs in middle and high schools nationwide.
- The Administration will audit and make accountability improvements to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) tip line and promote its use.
- DOJ will provide emergency and crisis training for local law enforcement.

Mental Health Reform

- The President is proposing increased integration of mental health, primary care, and family services, as well as support for programs that utilize court-ordered treatment.
- The President is calling for a review of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), *Health*

Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and other privacy protections to determine if any changes or clarifications are needed to improve coordination between mental health and other healthcare professionals, school officials, and law enforcement personnel.

Investigation

- The Administration will establish a federal commission, chaired by Secretary DeVos, to address school safety. The commission will recommend policy and funding proposals for school violence prevention. Among other issues, it will focus on: age restrictions for certain firearm purchases; existing entertainment rating systems and youth consumption of violent entertainment; strategies to advance the science and practice of youth character development and a culture of connectedness; effects of press coverage of mass shootings; repeal of the Obama Administration's Rethink School Discipline policies; best practices for school buildings and campus security; integration and coordination of federal resources for prevention and mitigation of active shooter incidents at schools; opportunities to improve access to mental health treatment; best practices for school-based threat assessment and violence prevention strategies; effectiveness and appropriateness of psychotropic medication for treatment of troubled youth; and ensuring that all findings are sufficiently supported by existing and additional federal, state, and local funding sources. (Note: The Secretary welcomes feedback submitted via safety@ed.gov.)

Secretary DeVos highlighted the President's actions in recent interviews on NBC's "[TODAY Show](#)" and "[Fox & Friends](#)" and in remarks at the [National PTA Legislative Conference](#) (see more below).

Last week, the Secretary visited Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The program for the visit was developed in coordination with Principal Ty Thompson to provide minimal disruption on students' first full day back in the school. The Secretary met with students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. She also laid a wreath outside the building that was the site of the shooting. A school newspaper reporter, broadcasting student, and yearbook photographer accompanied the Secretary throughout the visit ([readout](#)).

Additionally, the President met with video game industry leaders ([readout](#)), and the President, First Lady Melania Trump, and the Secretary all met with Douglas student Kyle Kashuv ([video](#) and [tweet](#)).

DISASTER RELIEF AID

Secretary DeVos announced the [reallocation of \\$22.9 million in unexpended funds](#) to assist students at colleges and universities located in major disaster areas impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, as well as institutions across the country that have enrolled a significant number of students from the affected areas. Last fall, Congress unanimously passed the *Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria Education Relief Act of 2017*, authorizing the Secretary to reallocate previously appropriated campus-based funds.

The Department will provide \$5.4 million to students at [285 colleges and universities](#) -- including 277 institutions located in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands -- through the Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) Program. Since September 2017, the agency has provided more than \$13 million in additional relief funds through the FSEOG program to colleges and universities for undergraduate students with exceptional financial need. Separately, the Department will provide \$17.5 million to students at [1,179 colleges and universities](#) -- including 321 institutions located in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands -- through the Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program. In total, the agency has reallocated \$27.9 million to colleges and universities for students participating in the FWS program.

Also, the Secretary announced [forgiveness of the hurricane relief loans](#) provided to four Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast in 2005. The *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018* made funds available to fully forgive the loans of Dillard University, Southern University at New Orleans, Tougaloo College, and Xavier University of Louisiana.

ESSA UPDATE

Addressing the nation's Chief State School Officers last week, Secretary DeVos delivered "tough love" regarding progress under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Her remarks came after her review and approval of a majority of states' ESSA plans. The law requires a federal review to ensure compliance with the law but gives wide latitude to the states to determine how best to ensure educational success. The Secretary challenged the Chiefs to embrace the flexibility afforded them and innovate on behalf of their students. "Just because a plan complies with the law doesn't mean it does what's best for students," she explained.

Following are excerpts from her [remarks](#), and video is available [here](#).

"Some of your own governors -- Republicans and Democrats -- didn't like your plans either and refused to sign off on them.... [One] warned his state's superintendent that 'adding layers of bureaucratic paperwork does little to help low-performing schools.' Still another governor lamented that his state's plan 'stymies any attempt to hold schools accountable for student performance and includes provisions aimed at preserving the status quo in failing schools.'"

"[T]he imperative to do something shouldn't have to come from Washington. It shouldn't have to come from your state capital. The imperative to do better comes from students. We are accountable to them!.... There is no ceiling on what students can achieve. These plans merely establish the floor! ESSA plans are just words on a page.... The real work of ESSA lies ahead."

"Right now a student is being bullied somewhere for only wanting to read, pay attention to the teacher, and learn. Right now a student is being told he can't study a topic for his dream job because the school building doesn't have the teacher or the technology. Right now a student at school is stepping over rats, breathing in mold, and dodging fists.... That child doesn't care about an ESSA plan. That student's parents don't care about my signature on your piece of paper. They care about what you do... We can act now. We must act now."

ICYMI

On March 6, Secretary DeVos gave [opening remarks](#) and moderated a panel discussion on innovation in higher education at the SXSW EDU Conference in Texas. "[T]here is a fundamental disconnect between education and the economy," she noted. "That's why students need better. They need learning environments that are agile, relevant, and exciting. Every student deserves a customized, self-paced, and challenging life-long learning journey." She also previewed the [Higher Education Ecosystem Challenge](#) being launched later this spring. Under the challenge, multi-sector teams will propose design concepts for a truly student-centered system. A variety of partners will work closely with the Department to implement the most innovative pilots.

Next, on March 8, the Secretary gave [opening remarks](#) and participated in a conversation with former Florida Governor Jeb Bush at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) World Forum in Georgia. "There are a number of what I'd call common sense solutions that would mitigate education challenges," she said. "Look at higher education in the United States and compare it to K-12. In higher ed, we have Pell Grants for low-income students to attend the college or university of their choice. It's wildly popular in Congress and with the general public -- and it should be! But what is Pell if not a voucher to pursue higher ed? Why can a student use a Pell Grant to attend any private or religious school they choose, but their family can't use a voucher to choose a school other than the one to which their child is geographically assigned? The same argument applies to the [G.I. bill](#)."

Then, on March 13, the Secretary offered [keynote remarks](#) at the National PTA Legislative Conference. "Parents need to know -- and have the right to know -- what is and is not working about their children's schools," she stated. "Some parents want to be equipped with the information to make a different choice for their child, and others want to know where their child's current school needs to get better. The ESSA encourages states to

be transparent to parents and taxpayers alike. Parents need information that is accessible, relevant, and actionable. That information is power to help improve a child's school. You also deserve the power to decide what's best for your child.... [T]he federal-first, top-down approach distorts what education ought to be: a trusting relationship between teacher, parent, and student.”

OPIOID SUMMIT

Earlier this month, the White House hosted an opioid summit to discuss Administration-wide efforts to combat the opioid crisis. The summit featured individuals who have been affected by the crisis and addiction- and recovery-focused organizations. Panels targeted education and prevention, treatment and recovery, and law enforcement and interdiction ([fact sheet](#), [President's remarks](#), and [“How We Will Win the War on Opioids” article](#)).

ODDS AND ENDS

- President Trump announced his [intent to nominate](#) Mark Schultz of Nebraska to be Commissioner of the Department's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).
- Also, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee favorably reported the nominations of [Frank Brogan](#) to be Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education and [Mark Schneider](#) to be Director of the Institute of Education Sciences.
- The Department is inviting applications under the Charter Schools Program (CSP) [discretionary grant competitions](#).
- Secretary DeVos announced that more students who attended Charlotte School of Law are eligible for a [closed school discharge](#).
- A [Federal Register notice](#) clarifies the Department's position on state regulation of federal student loan servicers.
- A National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) [“Statistics in Brief”](#) spotlights significant changes in teacher autonomy, satisfaction, job security, and commitment between 1999-2000 and 2011-12.
- The Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced new efforts to provide states and districts with additional flexibility and support to [operate more efficient school meal programs](#).
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded more than \$8.7 million to [replace or retrofit 452 older diesel school buses](#), part of 141 school bus fleets in 32 states.

QUOTE TO NOTE

“On International Women's Day, we celebrate the many incredible contributions made by women of all ages in the United States and around the world. We honor the vital role of women in our communities, businesses, civil society, and government. And, we reaffirm our nation's commitment to ensuring that every person has the opportunity to succeed. Despite some recent progress around the world, too many women still face tremendous barriers to participation in all aspects of life. This must change. Women are critical to economic growth and global stability. When women are empowered, communities and entire nations thrive.”

-- President Donald Trump (3/8/18), in a [statement](#) on International Women's Day

UPCOMING EVENTS

Through Monday (March 19), the Department's Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, in collaboration with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African-Americans, invites nominations for the 2018 [Martin Luther King, Jr. Drum Major Innovative Service Award](#). This award is for volunteers who perform extraordinary everyday acts of service. The term “service” may include leading through outreach, mission-driven service, volunteerism, and ministry focused on innovative educational

experiences for students.

The [Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Program](#) aims to educate federal employees, students, teachers, and the public about the Holocaust, as well as other acts of genocide. This free event is held each year at a Washington, D.C., venue. This year, it will be held April 12 at the Lincoln Theatre.

April 16-18, the Department's Office of School Support and Rural Programs (SSRS) will host the 2018 Insular Areas Technical Assistance Meeting. Leadership teams from American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands will discuss high-quality and data-driven amendments to their [Consolidated Grant](#) applications. They will also identify areas in which to leverage resources to enhance the scope of elementary and secondary education programs.

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