**Budget, Finance & Funding News…**

**Federal COVID Relief Bill –**

* Bill Signed into Law: (from AASA) Last Thursday President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) into law. This nearly $2 trillion federal emergency supplemental appropriation is the sixth emergency package in response to the enduring COVID19 pandemic. The bill signed into law bears a striking resemblance to President Biden’s initial proposal. The funding is far reaching, and includes supports for vaccines, schools, small businesses, and anti-poverty programs. ARP includes almost $220 billion for education, childcare, and education-related programs, plus $362 billion for local and state fiscal relief, much of which could ultimately support education. The total for the Department of Education is more than twice the fiscal year 2021 regular funding total of $73 billion. You can check out our full analysis by clicking [here](#).

* Funding for Schools & Communities: Pennsylvania is estimated to receive more than $13.4 billion of the $1.9 trillion federal COVID-19 relief package. That breaks down to about $7.3 billion coming to state government and $6.1 billion to counties, municipalities and school districts. A searchable database allows you to see the estimated amount that your school district or charter school, as well as county and municipality, will receive, as calculated by the House Democratic Appropriations Committee. [Click here](#) for that information. (as published on pennlive.com, 3/12/21) PASBO also has developed estimates for available funding to school entities. [Click here](#) for their estimates.

**Guidance, Reports and Resources…**

**Research on Remediation** – The research on what works in helping students catch up, without holding them back or putting them in remedial classes where they miss out on regular content, can be complex and confusing. Education Week and has picked out three of the most salient studies for district leaders as they begin to plan for this summer and beyond. They include:

* Extensive tutoring works, even in the secondary grades.
* Extended learning academies offer a year-round model.
* Summer learning can work—but attendance is a concern.

Read the rest of the story: “3 Studies for District Leaders to Read as They Plan for Learning Recovery” (from Education Week, 3/11/21).

**E-Rate and Broadband Connectivity –** At the start of the pandemic, which forced nearly every district to do some virtual learning, as many as 15 million of the country’s 50.7 million public school students lacked adequate connectivity to learn online at home, a Common Sense Media survey found last spring. What’s more, 10 percent of public school teachers nationwide also did not have sufficient internet capacity for online learning, the survey found. President Joe Biden put student home connectivity front and center when he tapped Jessica Rosenworcel as acting commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission. Under Rosenworcel’s leadership, the FCC is exploring broadening the E-Rate to allow the funds to be used for home connectivity. Rosenworcel’s predecessor during the Trump administration, Ajit Pai, repeatedly rejected requests to expand the program to help students gain access to the internet at home. (from Education Week, 3/10/21)

**PASA Resources** – PASA’s [web page](#) concerning the Coronavirus and Pandemic Preparation includes links to information about COVID-related issues, along with updated guidance from the PDE, CDC and USDE, and other important updates from the state and federal levels.

**Resources from PASA Sponsors** – PASA is grateful for the ongoing support of our sponsors at all levels. Although PASA does not promote or endorse any product or service offered by our sponsors, we are pleased to share information they offer that may be helpful to school leaders, particularly concerning return-to-school issues. PASA sponsors have offered free webinars and other unique opportunities and resources to assist PASA members
in planning for the school year. A recording of several of these webinars and a list of additional FREE resources and information is available on the PASA website.

**In Legislative News…**

**Session Update** – Both the House and Senate return to session this week.

**Appropriations Committee Hearing Last Week** – During one of last week’s Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, Matt Knittel, executive director of the Independent Fiscal Office (IFO), reported that IFO staff estimates 470,000 jobs were lost through December 2020 and it will take the state six years to return to pre-pandemic job numbers. However, he indicated that the IFO believes the state’s real gross domestic product and personal income will surpass 2019 numbers by 2022.

When asked about the potential impact of Gov. Wolf’s proposed increase in the state’s minimum wage, Knittel stated, “We do think raising the minimum wage will present some challenges. However, there’s also a benefit because lower income individuals will have more income and we do think that this has the potential to expand the economy because they tend to spend their money at higher rates.” Knittel also said that the IFO calculated in 2019 that a $12 minimum wage would generate an additional $50 million in revenue for the general fund.

Concerning the EIT, property taxes and included a school district property tax forecast, Knittel said, "We're projecting a reduction in school property taxes for the current year on the order of 1.7 percent due to economic distress, rental forbearance programs and shifting payment periods that discount the tax base and reduce penalty periods."

**Upcoming Appropriations Hearings on the Proposed Budget** – The schedule of ongoing appropriations hearings in the Senate through April are as follows:
- * March 18: Department of Education
- * March 22: Department of Community & Economic Development
- * April 6: Pennsylvania Treasury Department
- * April 7: Office of Attorney General and Office of Auditor General
- * April 22: Department of Health, Budget Secretary/Governor's Executive Office and Dept. of General Services

**Other Upcoming Committee Meetings** –

**Wednesday, March 17**

House State Government Committee
8:30 a.m. - Room G50 Irvis Office Building
Meeting to consider several bills, including **HB 335: Daylight Savings Time**. The bill would allow Pennsylvania to follow permanent Daylight Savings Time if the Congress of the United States permits states to do so.

**Thursday, March 25**

House Democratic Policy Committee
10:30 a.m. – Room G50 Irvis Office Building
Public hearing on racism in high school and college

**In State News…**

**Testing for Lead in Schools** – The Wolf Administration last week advised all schools and childcare programs in Pennsylvania of the Voluntary Lead in Child Care and School Drinking Water Testing Program, which will provide $1.74 million from a federal grant for testing lead in drinking water. The departments of Education and Human Services sent direct communications to eligible facilities to advise them of the availability of funding and how to access it.

The Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST) launched the Pennsylvania Voluntary Lead in Child Care and School Drinking Water Testing Program at leadfree.pa.gov. Eligible schools and childcares can
receive free water lead testing and related training and technical support.

The grant comes through the EPA’s Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act, specifically Section 1459B of the Safe Drinking Water Act, which authorizes grant funding for reducing lead in drinking water. The EPA funding will cover 100 percent of the cost of water testing. The governor recently urged the legislature to take action to provide subsequent remediation funding by amending the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) to allow for abatement of hazardous substances like lead and asbestos in schools. (from a press release)

**In National News…**

**Review of Title IX Rule** – President Joe Biden started the process last Monday to reverse a controversial Trump administration rule on how schools must respond to students’ claims of sexual assault and harassment. Biden signed an executive order that ordered the U.S. Department of Education to review the rule, which outlines obligations for K-12 schools, colleges, and universities under Title IX, the federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Biden’s order directs the Education Department to work with the U.S. Attorney General to review the rule within 100 days to ensure it is consistent with “governing law, including Title IX” and the policy of the Biden administration. Read the rest of the story: “[Biden Orders Review of Trump-Era Rule on Responding to Sexual Assault in Schools](https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2021/03/08/biden-orders-review-of-trump-era-rule-on-responding-to-sexual-assault-in-schools.html)” (from Education Week, 3/8/21).

**On the PASA Calendar…**

March 29……PASA Leadership Forum with Bill Daggett
April 2…………PASA office closed
April 7…………Professional Development Committee meeting (virtual)
April 8………Superintendent Forum: Leading Change (Session 3)