



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators  
*Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools*

**Education Update**  
**December 3, 2018**

### **In Legislative News...**

**Election Update** – After a Bucks County judge rejected a legal challenge concerning absentee ballots, Rep. Tina Davis (Democrat) conceded a closely contested race for state Senate to Sen. Tommy Tomlinson, the incumbent Republican. Tomlinson won reelection with a 74-vote margin among more than 100,000 ballots cast. Davis will retain her position in the House. Tomlinson's victory gives Senate Republicans a 29-21 edge in that chamber. Two special elections still must be conducted to fill vacant House seats created by the death of Rep. Sid Michaels Kavulich (D-Lackawanna) and the recent criminal conviction of Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown (D-Philadelphia).

### **In National News...**

**Lawsuit Over Civics Education** – The U.S. Constitution contains an implicit guarantee of an education, argues a new federal lawsuit, and the failure of public schools to prioritize civics is depriving students of that right and preventing them from effectively exercising other key rights, like voting. The lawsuit is the latest in a recent wave to attempt to locate a constitutional right to an education—a holy grail of sorts for education advocates. But it's a right that federal courts have been reluctant to recognize since, ruling more than 40 years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court said that the Constitution's 14th amendment equal-protection clause did not cover disparities in local school district funding. Filed in the U.S. District Court for Rhode Island on behalf of more than a dozen students there, *A.C. v. Raimondo* alleges that the state has violated students' rights under multiple sections of the U.S. Constitution by failing to provide an education "that prepares them adequately to vote, to exercise free speech, petition the government, actively engage in civic life and exercise all of their constitutional rights." *Read the rest of the story: ["Education Is Fundamental to Citizenship-- And a Constitutional Right, New Lawsuit Alleges"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 11/29/18).

**Process for Investigating Civil Rights Complaints** –The U.S. Department of Education's internal watchdog—the Office of the Inspector General—will be looking at the agency's process for dismissing civil rights complaints. The plan was revealed in an agenda for 2019 posted on the inspector general's website. The department recently revamped its process for investigating potential civil rights violations. The Obama administration looked at every complaint for potential evidence of systemic discrimination. The Trump team is only planning to do that in certain cases. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and company have said that this will help resolve more cases quickly, but civil rights groups are worried that investigators may miss the bigger picture. And the OIG will examine the department's oversight of state accountability systems developed under the Every Student Succeeds Act, paying special attention to how schools are identified and improvement plans. *Read the rest of the story: ["Ed. Dept. Watchdog to Look Into DeVos Team's Oversight of ESSA, Dismissal of Civil Rights Complaints"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 11/29/18).

**Uninsured Children** – A new report out from Georgetown University shows an uptick in uninsured children, reversing almost a decade of declines. The share of children without health insurance nationally increased from 4.7 percent in 2016 to 5 percent in 2017. Three-quarters of the children who lost coverage between 2016 and 2017 live in states that have not expanded Medicaid coverage to parents and other low-income adults. The uninsured rates for children increased at almost triple the rate in non-expansion states than in states that have expanded Medicaid. [Click here](#) to read the report.

### **Across the Nation...**

**The Election and State Education Policy** – There will be a new cast of characters overseeing state education policy in 2019—and many of them will be looking to shake things up to deliver on the many promises they made on the campaign trail in this year's midterm elections. New governors—many of them Democrats—are expected to propose ambitious budgets with new ways of funding their K-12 systems. The fresh crop of governors and state board members is likely to lead to big turnover of state schools superintendents in places where they're appointed. And states where one party or the other has new control of both the legislature and governorship, such as Democrats in Colorado, may use that momentum to push school accountability and other changes at a time when the Every Student Succeeds Act gives them greater policy authority. *Read the rest of the story: [“How Election Results Will Shake Up State Education Policy”](#)* (from *Education Week*, 11/26/18).

### From AASA – ERate Reminder...

The FY19 application window for ERate will open in January. In preparation, school officials can now sign up for USAC and ERate webinars, including monthly ERate webinars and one on Dec 12 in preparation for the FY19 application. [Click here](#) for information.

It is also very important for school officials to know that last year nearly **\$1.2 billion** in available funds for the program were left unused, as the number of applications for funding decreased. As a result, **Congress is considering cutting-back funding for the program**. School officials are urged to take advantage of the ERate program and apply for funding in FY19!

### Reminder – For Your Students: Innovations Challenge...

With the December 31 entry deadline quickly approaching, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) are reminding high school students grades 9-12 to submit their entries for [PennDOT's Innovations Challenge](#). This year's challenge asks students to look at innovative methods, aside from laws and educational campaigns that can be developed in the next five to 10 years to get drivers to slow down in work zones.

### On the Calendar...

Dec. 5	Professional Development Committee meeting (virtual)
Dec. 10	PASA Webinar: Leading with the Board - Governance, Social Media, Sunshine Law
Dec. 17	Free Webinar on Digital Transformation
Dec. 24-25, 31	PASA office closed
Jan. 1	PASA office closed