

## Budget heads to president's desk – Dueling visions for Texas schools – Takeaways from White House summit – Duncan on college costs

By MAGGIE SEVERNS | 01/17/14 10:02 AM EDT

*With help from Caitlin Emma, Libby A. Nelson and Stephanie Simon*

**BUDGET HEADS TO PRESIDENT'S DESK:** The omnibus bill will head to President Barack Obama today, bringing an end to the battle over the fiscal 2014 budget. POLITICO's David Rogers has the story: <http://politi.co/1m9uTtX>

-- **The kitchen sink:** The list of riders in the bill is extensive and far-reaching. It alters the FAFSA, expands turnaround options for SIG, gives schools \$25 million for kitchen equipment, \$75 million for a new school safety initiative and allows charters to use federal funds for pre-K — for starters. A host of other provisions provide clues about congressional education priorities. In fact, the bill could be the most meaningful action on education by Congress in all of 2014, even though it's scarcely begun. More for Pros from Maggie Severns: <http://politico.pro/1dABexY>

-- **Where my pre-K party people at?:** At a party, in fact, said Catriona Macdonald, policy adviser at the First Five Years Fund. The group is hosting a State of the Union watching party for advocates in celebration of the \$1 billion early childhood investment carved out during the appropriations process. Considering that the bill was a “no new money bill, ... it was a fabulous way to start 2014,” she said.

**DUELING VISIONS FOR TEXAS SCHOOLS:** Democratic state Sen. Wendy Davis of Texas has released the latest plank in her campaign for governor — and it's all about recruiting top teachers. Davis wants to encourage high-performing high school students to consider a career in education by guaranteeing them early admission to college and a teaching job in a Texas public school as soon as they earn their credentials. Davis also wants high schools to offer special classes for students interested in becoming teachers, similar to career paths offered in health science and criminal justice. She aims to boost teacher pay. Davis' platform: <http://bit.ly/1j3nMUo>

--**Her likely rival,** Republican Attorney General Greg Abbott, dismissed Davis' platform as fuzzy — she doesn't spell out how she'll pay for it all — and offered his own view on local talk radio. Abbott said there's too much pressure to get all kids to enroll in college; he wants more

emphasis on workforce training. He also talked about giving more control over the curriculum to educators so they're not forever teaching to a test. Abbott's remarks: <http://bit.ly/1fCxj6Z>.

**--Both candidates are raising huge sums:** <http://politi.co/1eFH7YG>

**GOOD FRIDAY MORNING, JAN 18.** Happy Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend to you! We will be taking a break Monday. Send your news tips, bright ideas and scoops to [mseverns@politico.com](mailto:mseverns@politico.com) and @maggieseverns. Libby will be back on Tuesday: [lnelson@politico.com](mailto:lnelson@politico.com) and @libbyanelson. Send events to [educalendar@politicopro.com](mailto:educalendar@politicopro.com). And follow us on Twitter at @morning\_edu and @POLITICOPro.

**TAKEAWAYS FROM WHITE HOUSE SUMMIT:** Education Secretary Arne Duncan on Thursday called on higher education leaders to seriously support the Common Core. If students are held to a higher standard, he said, they won't need as much remedial coursework in college — and college presidents at the daylong meeting applauded, literally, his proposal. As for what's next: top economic adviser Gene Sperling urged college leaders to follow up before the State of the Union Jan. 28. Watch the president and first lady's speeches: <http://cs.pn/K82Krs>

**--One striking detail:** First lady Michelle Obama talked in detail about her experiences as a first-generation college student at Princeton University — where, she said, she wouldn't have applied if her brother hadn't attended on a basketball scholarship. She was totally lost on campus, she said. "I didn't even bring the right size sheets for my dorm room bed," she said, to laughter. "I didn't realize those beds were so long. So I was a little overwhelmed and a little isolated."

**--Dinner on Lumina:** The foundation, which focuses on higher education and college completion, paid for dinner at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building for some summit participants Wednesday, Sperling said. White House rules ban using taxpayer money to pay for meals at special events.

**DUNCAN ON COLLEGE COSTS:** Duncan also urged states to spend more on higher education as the summit got underway. He talked tuition prices with MSNBC's Chuck Todd, who made it clear he subscribes to what's known as the Bennett Hypothesis: Federal spending on higher ed actually drives costs higher. As for incentives, Duncan said, "I'm a big believer in carrots rather than sticks," including ways to encourage states to reinvest. Purdue President Mitch Daniels later talked about Purdue's tuition freeze. The segments: <http://on.msnbc.com/K81xR7> and <http://on.msnbc.com/K82nNI>.

**MORE CHOICE IN THE PELICAN STATE:** Louisiana students will have still more options next year to build an a la carte education by taking classes from private providers on the public dime. The state's novel Course Choice program — hailed by many education reformers as a national model — lets students sign up for classes ranging from AP Calculus to equine science to cosmetology, delivered online or in person by approved providers. Students can take any approved course for free if they attend a school rated C, D or F. The state will pay for students in top-performing public schools to take any class not offered at their home campus.

-- **New choices on tap:** Among the new classes approved for next year: An AP Computer Science from Amplify, a division of News Corp.; online courses in dental assisting and automotive technology from Penn Foster, a for-profit college; and a career readiness “soft skills” class from a Chicago company called SkillBott, Inc. There are also classes in welding and nursing. Students can even sign up for online speech therapy.

-- **How the money flows:** Districts must pay Course Choice tuition for their student, but the state will reimburse schools for 90 percent of the cost. They will have an option to opt out of the program. The new providers: <http://bit.ly/1m9fA4t>

**WHEN SCHOOLS GO BAD...** : The Fordham Institute kicked off a lively debate with the release this week of a toolkit to help lawmakers expand voucher programs. Among its core principles: Students who receive vouchers should be required to take the same tests as peers in public schools, so their academic progress can be tracked. That did not go over well with other voucher advocates. Their argument: Private schools that participate in voucher programs should not be accountable to state government — even though they’re receiving state money. Instead, they should be accountable to parents, who can evaluate schools based on whatever metrics they deem most important. Forcing every school to give the state test would “induce conformity and stifle diversity and innovation,” Jason Bedrick wrote on a Cato Institute blog [<http://bit.ly/1asLeEY>]. Plus, he said, there’s no proof it would bolster school performance. Robert Enlow at the Friedman Foundation argues against testing voucher students, too: <http://bit.ly/1m9hpOR>

-- **Petrilli’s retort:** Private schools can be just as “crummy” as public schools. It’s not good social policy to let kids stay in bad schools. But there’s no way to sort the good from the bad without common metrics, such as test scores. He also appealed to the reform movement’s self-interest: “Bad private schools will get lots of media attention, which will drive down public support for school choice and strengthen the hands of those who opposed such programs in the first place and are just waiting to eradicate them.” His post: <http://bit.ly/1atd47i>.

**NEW APPOINTEES TO PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS:** Complete list: <http://1.usa.gov/1fD7Vhb>.

### **REPORT ROLL CALL:**

--The Education Trust provides a detailed case study for how campus leadership can boost overall graduation rates and improve success rates for Latino and low-income students. Former California State University, Northridge, President Jolene Koester wielded focused leadership, shared governance and the effective use of data to grow Latino graduation rates from 34 percent to 42 percent, similar to the growth for low-income students. <http://bit.ly/1gRxJcX>

--The National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement has released a new guidebook aimed at educators and policymakers that offers effective models of civics and service-learning that they can incorporate into the classroom and community: <http://bit.ly/1eFuSeL>

## **MOVERS AND SHAKERS:**

--Felicia Cumings Smith will be leaving her post as the associate commissioner of education in Kentucky to serve as the new CEO for the National Institute for School Leadership.

--Erin A. Hennessy shifts from her role at the American Council on Education to vice president at TVP Communications, a higher education-focused public relations firm.