

Federal Budget Threatens to Starve Education

From the ISTE Advocacy Network:

On March 16, 2017, The White House released the President's proposed "Skinny Budget" for FY18, a streamlined blueprint for next year's budget that does not contain much detail about specific changes. What is clear from this Skinny Budget is that the President is attempting to make good on his previously announced plans to shift \$54 billion in domestic discretionary funding to defense spending and that the Department of Education would be one of the federal agencies that would suffer significant funding losses as a result. For education, the Skinny Budget proposes to cut \$9 billion in funding, which it represents as a 13.5 percent decrease, below the current FY 17 levels. While the Skinny Budget is silent on the ISTE-supported Title IV, Part A flexible block grant program, which would provide districts with funding for educational technology, it remains possible that the Administration will seek low or no funding for this program as the funding process plays out. While it is ultimately up to Congress to dispose of the President's proposals through the appropriations process and some Republican members have expressed skepticism about the President's proposals already, some significant education cuts are likely in the end.

If the Department of Education's overall funding level of \$59 billion becomes law, it will take federal education support back to approximately FY08 levels. In his budget proposal, the President attains the majority of his cuts through eliminating: the \$2.25 billion Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants Program, a block grant that school districts use to hire and train teachers and administrators; the \$1.2 billion 21st Century Community Learning Centers

program, which provides funding for after school and summer programs; the \$732 million Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity program, a higher education need-based aid program; and the \$3.9 billion Pell Grant surplus. The Skinny Budget also indicates that more than 20 other programs would be eliminated, including the Striving Readers, Teacher Quality Partnership, Impact Aid Support Payments for Federal Property, and International Education programs. The budget would protect IDEA, funding it at the same level as last year, and increase Title I funding but with a school choice twist.

The central aim of the President's education funding proposals is to begin to shift a significant share of federal dollars towards supporting his goal of providing parents and students greater school choice. The Skinny Budget would accomplish this in three ways:

- adding \$168 million to the existing Charter Schools Grant program;
- establishing a new private school choice program (no details provided) and funding it at \$250 million; and
- increasing Title I by \$1 billion but allowing those funds to move with students to public schools of their choice.

This last move, known as Title I portability, was the subject of intense debate during the recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act but Congress did not incorporate the concept into the final Every Student Succeeds Act.

Now is the time to get involved and let your Congressional representative know that you support public education. Not sure who represents you? Start [here](#).

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