



NREAC 2017 Legislative Agenda

For 2017, NREAC identified the following major federal advocacy priorities:

1. Preserve critical federal funding for rural schools
2. Consideration of the needs of rural schools by the Trump/DeVos Administration
3. Protect rural schools from privatization schemes

Funding for Rural Schools

NREAC urges Congress to maintain formula grants to provide a more reliable stream of funding to local school districts.

NREAC opposes unfunded mandates from the Administration or Congress.

NREAC believes any competitive funds slated for a 'rural set-aside' or 'rural-only' competition should instead be directed to the Rural Education Achievement Program, a proven formula program that supports rural school innovation.

NREAC opposes any across-the-board cuts and the elimination of key education programs.

NREAC supports a federal role that prioritizes investment in Title I and IDEA, recognizing them as the federal flagship initiatives. In light of the failure of federal and state governments to maintain special education funding, districts should be provided greater flexibility to meet the needs of all students.

NREAC urges Congress to maintain other critical funding streams for rural schools. In particular, REAP, Title II Part A, 21st Century grants, Perkins CTE, E-Rate and Secure Rural Schools must continue at current levels.

NREAC questions efforts in Congress to spend limited federal resources on private schools when they simply are not present in rural communities or accessible to students in rural communities.

Focus on Rural Schools at The U.S. Department of Education

NREAC requests that the U.S. Department of Education should take care to consider the needs and capacity of rural schools when proposing new regulations, guidance, and technical assistance, and to ensure that any regulations issued are consistent with the spirit and scope of the law.

NREAC urges the U.S. Department of Education to consider the administrative burden of data collection on rural districts. Specifically, the Department should exempt rural school districts from annually responding to the Civil Rights Data Collection and return to a sampling methodology that ensured they were not submitting data annually.

NREAC recommends that the U.S. Department of Education create an Office of Rural Education Policy to ensure policies, programs and funding streams consider the capacity of rural schools.

Efforts to privatize or redirect federal funds to private schools

NREAC opposes any and all attempts to create or adopt 'backpack funding' approaches to distributing federal funding at the state and local level or any policy.

NREAC opposes the reauthorization of the D.C. voucher program, any attempt to incentivize federal tax credits for donations to private schools and any efforts to create educational savings accounts for students.

Education Technology

NREAC strongly supports maintaining E-Rate as an element of the Universal Service Fund.

NREAC supports efforts at the federal level to address the homework gap through expanded access to connectivity at home.

Support expansion of bandwidth as connectivity grows

School Nutrition

NREAC supports reimbursing schools when federal food service requirements result in loss of revenue.

NREAC recommends giving districts the option to waive out of unfunded federal food service requirements.

NREAC believes all licensing and certification requirements for school nutrition workers are a state responsibility.

NREAC opposes efforts to increase the administrative burden around eligibility for free and reduced lunch verification

NREAC supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm to Table Program.

NREAC does not support changes made to the Community Eligibility Provision eligibility threshold.

NREAC supports an increase in reimbursement for the national school lunch and school breakfast programs.

NREAC opposes any attempts at turning school nutrition funding into a block grant or consolidated funding stream.

Perkins CTE

NREAC believes Perkins CTE funds should remain formula based to states and districts.

NREAC believes Perkins should incentivize states to assist districts in providing more effective career counseling and exploration activities.

NREAC strongly supports efforts to streamline the local plan and reduce paperwork and reporting requirements.

Other Priorities

NREAC supports efforts to ensure Qualified Zone Academy Bonds are readily available to rural schools and that rural schools are included in any infrastructure package. Any infrastructure proposal in Congress must include funding for modernizing or maintaining rural school facilities.

NREAC opposes attempts to block-grant Medicaid to states and eliminate school-based Medicaid reimbursement.

NREAC believes all school districts have a responsibility to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment for students, but geographic and economic challenges in rural communities make this reality more difficult.

NREAC wants to ensure RELs are funded to provide high quality research to rural schools

NREAC supports efforts at the federal level to assist rural districts in recruiting and retaining teachers and school personnel in hard to staff positions through loan forgiveness programs targeted at rural communities and districts

NREAC supports a greater federal investment in early education through the coordination and support of new and already existing school-based and community partnerships.

NREAC supports the reauthorization and re-funding of the Secure Rural Schools program.