

National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition

2013 Legislative Agenda



For 2013, NREAC identified four major federal advocacy priorities: funding, re-authorization of ESEA, education technology, and school safety.

Focus on Rural Schools and Funding

- NREAC urges Congress to maintain formula grants to provide a more reliable stream of funding to local school districts.
- NREAC opposes competitive grants, recognizing the unique capacity issues that impede the ability of rural districts to apply. NREAC opposes the shift toward competitive funding as the primary vehicle for funding America's public schools, especially rural schools.
- 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 is opposed to sequestration and urges Congress to act to avoid the draconian, across-the-board cuts.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

- NREAC advocates for complete reauthorization of ESEA this year. Reauthorization should emphasize that the federal government's role is not to set curriculum or make local education decisions, tasks that should be left to states and school districts.
- NREAC supports the Formula Fairness campaign in its efforts to end Title I formula discrimination against disadvantaged rural students. NREAC supports the All Children Are Equal Act and its inclusion within any ESEA reauthorization as a way to eliminate the unintended negative consequences of number weighting within the Title I formula.
- NREAC advocates for key eligibility changes to the REAP program to ensure more rural districts are able to receive the critical funding they need.
- Re-authorization must include the creation of an Office of Rural Education Policy within the Department of Education.

Education Technology and E-Rate

- NREAC believes any reauthorization of ESEA should contain a standalone program providing funding for technology, whether current Title II Part D or a similar program
- NREAC opposes the proposed expansion of E-Rate eligible applicants beyond the current K-12 institutions.
- NREAC strongly supports maintaining E-Rate as an element of the Universal Service Fund.
- NREAC supports increasing the current \$2.25 billion funding cap (beyond the rate of inflation) for the program to meet ever-increasing demand for technological services in schools.

School Safety

- NREAC believes all school districts have a responsibility to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment for students, but believes geographic and economic challenges in rural communities make this reality more difficult.
- NREAC believes Congress must target funds directly to rural school districts to ensure they have strong emergency management plans, mental health professionals as well as school resource officers, and security equipment.
- NREAC encourages Congress to consider funding existing federal programs, such as the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program and the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Program, before creating new programs.
- NREAC believes that decisions as to who is armed within a district in emergency situations is a local decision.