



Federal Update

2017 EDTECH ADVOCACY ROUNDUP

Advocacy on behalf of ISTE's members at the national level for the policies and programs that directly impact our educators is a valuable benefit of ISTE membership. ISTE's advocacy team was hard at work throughout 2017, protecting and advancing policies that provide professional development for educators, support funding for technology in classrooms and help connect students to the internet at home and in the classroom. ISTE focused on educating lawmakers on the importance of keeping these programs in law and the need to adequately fund them.

We met with dozens of members of Congress, conducted briefings on Capitol Hill, filed numerous regulatory comments, rallied ISTE members to contact their congressional representatives at key decision-making moments, and issued press statements in support of edtech-related policies, including within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Higher Education Act, the E-Rate program and net neutrality.

On March 14-15, we'll continue our efforts to empower ISTE members to become strong state-level advocates and provide you an opportunity to meet federal policy makers face to face on Capitol Hill at the [EdTech Advocacy](#)

[and Policy Summit](#) in Washington, D.C. We hope you'll join us!

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

ISTE played a major role in ensuring that education technology provisions and professional development programs for educators were maintained when the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed at the end of 2015. Since then, ISTE's advocacy team has focused its efforts on securing adequate funding for Title II-A (professional development program) and Title IV-A (edtech provisions) within the law.

Title II-A: Funding for the Title II-A program, which many ISTE members use to attend the ISTE Conference & Expo, was placed in serious jeopardy in 2017 after both President Donald Trump and the House of Representatives called for the complete elimination of funding for the program that currently receives \$2.05 billion annually. Richard Culatta, ISTE's CEO, responded quickly to these threats by issuing public [statements](#) about the negative consequences of underfunding this program. In addition, the ISTE advocacy team joined other education organizations to participate in a National Advocacy Day in support of these programs, resulting in thousands of tweets, letters to Congress and phone calls in support of this program. Thankfully, these advocacy efforts were heard by the U.S. Senate and level

funding for Title II-A was included in this year's funding bill. The program's fate remains unknown as Congress and the president continue to negotiate on final federal spending for fiscal year 2018.

Title IV-A: ISTE's advocacy team led the effort as a steering committee member of the [Title IV-A Coalition](#) (60+ national organizations) to secure maximum investments in the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program under Title IV-A of ESSA. The program, which supports well-rounded programming, safe and healthy schools, and education technology programs, is authorized at \$1.6 billion for fiscal year 2018. However, the program is coming off a first year of operation where it only received \$400 million in funding in 2017, or slightly less than 25 percent of what it should have.

In addition to leading the coalition, meeting with dozens of members of Congress and participating in several National Days of Action, ISTE Chief Learning Officer Joseph South was a featured panelist during the Title IV-A briefing on Capitol Hill this fall. South strongly advocated for investments in the program and stressed the need to adequately invest in the block grant. To highlight ISTE's efforts at the national level, Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)—our Title IV-A champion in the House—specifically thanked ISTE for its work in support of Title IV-A. ISTE and the coalition are hopeful that this program receives an increase in fiscal year 2018 so that districts can invest in the critical areas Title IV-A supports.

While the levels for fiscal year 2018 have not yet been finalized by Congress, ISTE is continuing efforts to ensure maximum funds for these programs, which directly benefit our members, and most importantly, the nation's students. We expect Congress will finalize spending bills by the end of January and will notify our members through the Advocacy Network.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT (HEA)

In recognition that the nation's federal higher education laws have not been updated since

2008, Congress has recently taken a specific interest in reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. Because of technology's large role in the higher education system, ISTE has been actively working across both sides of the aisle to ensure our priorities are heard so that preservice educators are fully prepared to use technology to teach students when they enter a classroom.

ISTE Chief Learning Officer Joseph South met with staff from Chairwoman of the House Education and Workforce Committee Rep. Virginia Foxx's office (R-NC) and shared ISTE's top policy recommendations and priorities for higher education. These recommendations were also shared with Ranking Member Bobby Scott's (D-VA) office. [These recommendations](#) include policies that would incorporate the ISTE Standards for Educators and Administrators, focusing on preservice professional development and preparing educators to be leaders in the effective use of technology in the classroom.

Unfortunately, the reauthorization process has not been as bipartisan as ISTE would have hoped and Chairwoman Foxx released a highly partisan bill that does not reflect our priorities. If passed, it would be extremely detrimental to educators. The proposed bill would eliminate the professional development programs for preservice educators; the program that provides scholarships of \$4,000 per year to preservice educators who commit to serving in high-needs areas and subjects; and the loan forgiveness program for teachers.

ISTE does not support the PROSPER Act in the current form passed out of committee, as it clearly does not prioritize the need to adequately prepare educators in preservice programs to use technology to advance student learning in classrooms. ISTE will continue to meet with members on both sides of the aisle to advocate that this need be reflected in any final higher education laws.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND BROADBAND

E-Rate: ISTE has long been a steadfast champion of E-Rate, the \$3.9 billion federal

program that ensures all K-12 schools and public libraries have access to broadband and adequate Wi-Fi in their classrooms and reading rooms. In 2014, ISTE led the charge in a successful effort to modernize the program by focusing funding on Wi-Fi and to raise its annual spending cap by \$1.5 billion.

Although these changes have yielded terrific results already, with more than 90 percent of all K-12 classrooms meeting bandwidth goals after only three years, the program faces new challenges from a new FCC that may be interested in altering the program in ways that may not prove beneficial to schools and libraries. Just this fall, the FCC issued a notice seeking information on the program's Wi-Fi program, insinuating that not all of its funding was necessary.

ISTE swung into action with a number of meetings at the commission to assert the continued need for Wi-Fi funding. Additionally, ISTE took the lead in prompting its members to file individual comments with the FCC that showed the commission how they had used or planned to use this funding and to highlight that it was unavailable from other state and local sources. Finally, ISTE prepared a strongly worded filing for the Education & Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC), which represents most of the major K-12 public and private school organization plus the American Library Association, that made the case for continuing support for Wi-Fi.

To date, the FCC has not taken any major steps to dismantle or injure the program, but ISTE remains vigilant.

Net Neutrality: ISTE CEO Richard Culatta and Chief Learning Officer Joseph South took strong stands in an effort to prevent the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from rolling back net neutrality regulations that prevent internet providers from slowing down or speeding up Internet traffic to sites based on their content or services and charging more for faster service to certain sites that pay extra for it.

Culatta told *Politico*:

"Most educators remember when internet access was so slow and unreliable that it couldn't be used in the classroom. What we're saying now is, imagine going back to that, but for students and districts that aren't willing or able to pay."

In an [interview](#) for *National Public Radio's*, "All Things Considered," he declared:

"One of the key elements of the internet is that it provides immediate access to a huge range of high-quality resources that are really useful to teachers. But when carriers can choose to prioritize paid content over freely available content, schools really are at risk."

Chief Learning Officer Joseph South also co-wrote an [op-ed](#) for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, entitled "Digital Life in the Slow Lane," that described potential ramifications of the FCC ending net neutrality.

Despite this full-court press from ISTE, the FCC voted along party lines to rescind net neutrality on Dec. 14. The likely next stop is court, where attorneys general from a number of states have declared their intention to sue to block these changes. Other public interest groups and companies may follow suit in the near future. ISTE will be watching developments closely and supporting efforts to reinstate the FCC's net neutrality regulations.



Grassroots & State Advocacy

ISTE STANDARDS ADOPTED IN MULTIPLE STATES

Earlier in 2017, the Vermont State Board of Education unanimously adopted the [ISTE Standards for Students](#). Vermont is one of several states and school districts to formalize use of the ISTE Standards, including the states of Connecticut and Texas, and Los Angeles Unified School District.

Last June, the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology adopted the ISTE Standards for Students and the ISTE Standards for Educators, becoming the first state to do so in both cases. Texas became the first state to adopt the ISTE Standards in legislation. Many others are currently working on adoption and are expected to endorse or adopt the ISTE Standards in the coming months.



2018 Edtech Advocacy & Policy Summit – Join us!

CALLING ALL ISTE MEMBERS:

For the second year running, ISTE is joining forces with the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) to host...

***The EdTech Advocacy & Policy Summit
March 14-15, 2018
Washington, D.C.***

[Register today!](#)

CONTACT US!

If there's an important development in your state you'd like to share, please reach out to ISTE's advocacy team at advocacy@iste.org.