

# Administration Releases “Skinny” Budget; Education Feels the Pinch

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The Department of Education (ED) would receive a 14% reduction, impacting both K-12 and higher education programs. Under the [President’s plan](#), ED would receive \$59 billion in discretionary funding, a reduction of \$9 billion from the amount appropriated in the Fiscal Year 2017 Continuing Resolution (FY 2017 CR). School Choice would be the big winner, receiving a \$1.4 billion increase over the FY 2017 CR to support charter schools, a “new private school choice program” and Title I spending, provided there is “open enrollment.” To offset this increase, the Blueprint proposes to cut spending from an array of education programs, including:

- Elimination of Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants (\$2.4 billion)
- Elimination of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (\$1.2 billion)
- Elimination Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant – SEOG (\$732 million)
- Reduction in Federal Work-Study (unspecified)
- Reduction to Federal TRIO and GEAR UP programs (\$193 million total)

The Blueprint appears to maintain the current Pell Grant award of \$5,935 by tapping into the current budget surplus to pay for it.

It is important to note that this Blueprint is just that. There is no discussion of the revenue needed to fund it, policy statements supporting its elements or how mandatory spending such as debt service and pensions would continue to be supported – all of which are needed to understand the real impact of the spending proposals.

Congressional reaction to the Blueprint was as expected, with Democrats assailing the proposals and Republicans left asking questions about how to implement the recommendations. Congressional appropriators are in a bind: to adopt the President’s plan, the two Appropriations Subcommittee leaders, Representative Tom Cole (R-OK) and Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO), are going to have to cut spending from an already dwindling pot of discretionary funds. Moreover, the proposed cuts to programs like TRIO and SEOG, which are very popular among Democrats and advocates for low-income students, increases the political risk for Republicans. This could portend a brutal appropriation fight on Capitol Hill later this Spring, which will likely result in significant modifications to the Administration’s proposals.

While the Budget Blueprint is light on specifics, it sets up a potential clash between the Administration and Congress over the politics and policy of domestic spending. We will be monitoring this as the full budget is released and Congress begins to have its say.

**Vince Sampson** focuses on helping clients predict, navigate and understand the increasingly complex involvement of federal agencies and Congress.

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