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CU Federal Relations Monthly Update - 2.3.26 [1]

February 3, 2026 by Riley Black [2]

Note: This update was delayed due to last-minute developments in the FY26 appropriations process. CU Federal Relations will still send a February monthly update as planned. Thank you for your understanding.

FY26 Appropriations Update

The *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026* (H.R. 7148 [3]) was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President on Feb. 3, ending a brief partial government shutdown. This law funds federal agencies including the departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), War (DoW), Transportation (DoT) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the end of fiscal year 2026 (FY26) on Sep. 30 and extends funding at current levels for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) until Feb. 13. More can be read in CU's legislation overview [4].

The House had previously passed legislation that provided full funding to federal agencies, including DHS, through the end of FY26. These appropriation bills were packaged together and sent to the Senate as one minibus. However, following recent events in Minnesota, Senate Democrats declared that they would not vote for DHS funding without reforms to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). The Senate and White House agreed to separate the DHS bill from the other five appropriation bills to allow for further negotiations while keeping most of the government funded. The Senate approved the amended legislation by a 71-29 [5] vote on Jan. 30. The amended legislation required repassage by the House, which approved it by a 217-214 [6] vote on Feb. 3.

The *Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026* (H.R. 6938 [7]) was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President on Jan. 23. This law funds agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy (DOE), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Congress maintained relatively stable funding levels for most federal research agencies within the law, rejecting the President's request for deep agency cuts and program eliminations. More can be read in CU's legislation overview [8].

ED Delaying Involuntary Loan Payment Collection

ED announced on Jan. 16 that it will delay implementation of involuntary collections on federal student loans. Collection efforts such as Administrative Wage Garnishment (AWG) and the Treasury Offset Program (TOP) will be paused until ED implements student loan repayment reforms mandated in the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* (H.R. 1 [9]). More can be read in ED's press release [10].

ED Negotiated Rulemaking Update

The ED Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD) negotiated rulemaking committee reached consensus on Jan. 9 on a package of proposed accountability measures required under the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*. The proposed measure requires college undergraduate programs to show that graduates earn more than a working adult with a high school diploma. Programs that fail to meet this benchmark in two of three academic years lose access to Direct Loan programs, with Pell Grant access removed from institutions where 50 percent of students and 50 percent of Title IV funds are within programs that fail to meet the earning benchmark. ED will now draft and publish consensus regulatory language in the Federal Register. More can be read in ED's press release [11].

ED announced it will establish the Accreditation, Innovation, and Modernization (AIM) negotiated rulemaking committee on Jan. 26. The committee aims to revise current federal regulations governing accreditation, with a focus on "deregulation," "student outcomes," "merit," and "integrity." The AIM committee will convene in April and May, with negotiator nominations due on Feb. 26. More can be read in ED's press release [12].

Recent Federal Meetings

Massimo Ruzzene, Senior Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Dean of the Institutes at CU Boulder, and Iain Boyd, Director of the Center for National Security Initiatives [13] at CU Boulder, met virtually with staff from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) on Jan. 28.

Recent Congressional Visits

Rep. Joe Neguse spoke at the dedication ceremony for Ceal Barry Plaza held outside the CU Event Center at CU Boulder on Jan. 25. Chancellor Justin Schwartz and CU Athletic Director Fernando Lovo also spoke at the event honoring the legendary CU women's basketball coach. Regents Callie Rennison and Ilana Spiegel attended as well. More about the dedication ceremony can be read at the CU Buffs news page [14].

Federal Updates [15]

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