Published on *University of Colorado* (https://www.cu.edu)

Federal Government Update - 11.13.26 [1]

November 13, 2026 by Riley Black [2]

Dear Colleagues,

Please find a federal government update from our teams.

Election Update
Results for the federal midterm elections continue to come in. Democrats flipped both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. Currently, Democrats have a 256–169 House majority – with less than 10 races to be called – and a 55-44 Senate majority – with Alaska yet to be called.

Congressional leadership elections are underway ahead of the 120th Congress. Senate Republicans reelected [3] Sen. John Thune (R-SD) as their leader, while House Republicans elected [3] Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH) as House Minority Leader. House Democrats will hold their leadership elections the week of Nov. 16 and Senate Democrats will hold theirs in early December.

In Colorado, Sen. Hickenlooper (D) and Reps. Neguse (D-CD2), Hurd (R-CD3), Crow (D-CD6) and Pettersen (D-CD7) won reelection. New to the Colorado congressional delegation are Melat Kiros (D-CD1), Eileen Laubacher (D-CD4), Jessica Killin (D-CD5) and Manny Rutinel (D-CD8).

CU Comments on DHS Proposed Regulations
CU Boulder [4], Colorado Springs [5], and Denver|Anschutz [6] each submitted comments to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on Nov. 9 on a proposed rule [7] that would require new fees from U.S. universities to recommend nonimmigrant F-1 visa students for Optional Practical Training (OPT). The proposed fees would be $70,000 for initial OPT and $30,000 for subsequent OPT. Nearly 9,000 public comments on the proposal were submitted nationwide. U.S. universities estimate the fee will cost tens to hundreds of millions per institution each year, reports [8] *Inside Higher Ed*, which highlighted CU Boulder estimated impacts.

Additionally, CU Anschutz, Boulder, Colorado Springs and Denver submitted [9] joint comments on Nov.10 to DHS on a proposed rule [10] that would remove current regulations that give nonimmigrant workers, including skilled workers on H-1B visas, a maximum 60-day grace period to find new employment authorization if they lose their job. The 60-day grace period has been in place since 2017.

Scientific Associations Sue NSF to Block SBE Directorate Closure
A coalition of scientific associations and researchers filed a lawsuit [11] on Nov. 9 to prevent the National Science Foundation (NSF) from dismantling its Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE), which funds roughly two-thirds of federally sponsored U.S.

academic research in the disciplines. NSF proposed to eliminate SBE in the White House's FY27 budget request [12] to Congress. Lawmakers have not yet enacted funding legislation for the fiscal year, which began on Oct. 1. In the meantime, NSF has cut new SBE grant solicitations by about 90 percent and scaled back the directorate's workforce, reports [13] *Science*.

The lawsuit seeks to block NSF from closing the directorate, which it says violates the National Science Foundation Act of 1950 and the Administrative Procedure Act, as well as compel NSF to "continue soliciting funding opportunities, reviewing applications, and awarding grants" through the directorate.

Trainor Named Acting Assistant Attorney General for DOJ Civil Rights Division

The White House named [14] Craig Trainor acting assistant attorney general for the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) civil rights division on Nov. 10. Trainor has served as assistant secretary for fair housing at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development since October 2025 and as assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) prior to that. At ED, Trainor authored a 2025 dear colleague letter [15] that deemed race-conscious student programming, resources and financial aid illegal under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, guidance that was eventually vacated by a federal judge. It is unclear whether Trainor will be nominated to the position permanently.

The Federal Relations and General Counsel teams are actively monitoring developments at the federal level. We are working closely with the President and Chancellors, as well as the Colorado congressional delegation to champion CU priorities. We are committed to keeping you informed. Please visit the CU System Federal Updates and Actions page [16] for up-to-date communications and federal memos.

Danielle Radovich Piper, Sr. VP External Relations and Strategy
Kerry Tipper, Vice President, University Counsel

Federal Weekly Updates [17]
Send email when Published:
No

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-111326

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-111326
[2] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/author/167081 [3] https://www.npr.org/2026/11/10/nx-s1-6030988/gop-leadership-election-steve-scalise-jim-jordan [4] https://www.regulations.gov/comment/ICEB-2026-0100-6691 [5] https://www.regulations.gov/comment/ICEB-2026-0100-8540
[6] https://www.regulations.gov/comment/ICEB-2026-0100-7500
[7] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/10/08/2026-20660/optional-practical-training-fees
[8] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/global/international-students-us/2026/11/11/colleges-say-opt-fee-would-cost-tens-millions [9] https://www.regulations.gov/comment/USCIS-2026-0364-26914
[10] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/09/11/2026-18631/eliminating-the-discretionary-60-day-grace-period [11] https://fabbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/FABBS-et-al.-v.-National-Science-Foundation-et-al.pdf [12] https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/nsf_fy2027.pdf
[13] https://www.science.org/content/article/researchers-sue-block-nsf-demolishing-social-science-directorate?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F
[14] https://x.com/AGToddBlanche/status/2120349150784946201
[15] https://www.ed.gov/media/document/dear-colleague-letter-sffa-v-harvard-109506.pdf
[16] https://www.cu.edu/office-government-relations/federal-relations/federal-updates-and-actions
[17] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/tag/federal-weekly-updates