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

Federal Government Update - 3.20.26 [1]

March 20, 2026 by Riley Black [2]

Dear Colleagues,

Please find a federal government update from our teams.

Government Funding Update
Federal funding for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) lapsed on Feb. 14. Congress remains at an impasse over how to end the shutdown. Federal agencies impacted include the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Coast Guard.

Over one month into the shutdown, more than 300 TSA officers have quit, DHS said [3] on social media, while others have taken unscheduled time off, resulting in long wait times at airports across the country. Meanwhile Sen. Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), the White House's nominee to succeed Kristi Noem as DHS Secretary, testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee at a confirmation hearing [4] on March 18. You can read the *BBC's* five takeaways from the hearing here [5].

All other federal agencies are funded through Sept. 30, 2026.

UCAR Files Lawsuit to Stop NCAR Restructuring
The University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), which manages the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) for the National Science Foundation (NSF), filed a lawsuit [6] on March 16 against NSF, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the White House Office of Management and Budget. The lawsuit alleges that the federal government's efforts to dismantle NCAR violate the Constitution and *Administrative Procedure Act*. Moreover, the lawsuit alleges that UCAR and NCAR are targets in a federal "campaign of retribution" against Colorado. The lawsuit seeks an injunction to halt efforts currently underway to restructure NCAR. Read UCAR's statement here [7].

White House Convenes Roundtable on College Sports
The White House convened a Saving College Sports Roundtable [8] on March 6. The event, attended by more than 50 people, including NCAA president Charlie Baker and the commissioners of the Power Four conferences, discussed legislative solutions to shore up college sports, reports [9] *USA Today*. Calls for federal reform have grown as universities prepare for the second year of revenue sharing under the *House v. NCAA* settlement, reports [10] *Inside Higher Ed*. Congress has convened several hearings on reforming college athletics but has yet to enact any reforms. The White House said it will soon draft an executive order to overhaul the system.

Congress Reauthorizes SBIR/STTR Programs
The House passed [11] the *Small Business Innovation and Economic Security Act (S.3971)* [12] on March 17 by a vote of 345–41 [13], reauthorizing the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs through Sept. 30, 2031. The Senate passed [14] the legislation by unanimous consent on March 3. The previous authorization for the SBIR/STTR programs expired on Sept. 30, 2025. The bill now heads to the President's desk, where it is expected to be signed into law.

Genesis Mission Invites Applications to Address National Challenges
The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) invited [15] on March 17 interdisciplinary teams from DOE national laboratories, industry and academia to apply for over $293 million in federal funding to address over 20 national challenges using novel AI models and frameworks. Phase I awards will range from $500,000 to $750,000 over a nine-month project period. Phase II awards will range from $6 million to $15 million over a three-year project period. Phase I applications and Phase II letters of intent are due April 28. Phase II applications are due May 19. The Genesis Mission is a national effort to double the pace and impact of American innovation within a decade using AI.

DOE Office of Science Reorganization
The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced [16] on March 17 an organizational realignment that will combine the High Energy Physics and Nuclear Physics programs into a single office. Several other offices also appear to have been consolidated. It will be several months before the realignment is effective.

FDA Releases Considerations for New Approach Methodologies in Drug Development
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published [17] new draft guidance for industry on March 18 outlining how drug sponsors can incorporate innovative, non-animal testing into regulatory submissions to support drug safety and efficacy. The guidance, entitled "General Considerations for the Use of New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) in Drug Development," says NAMs must be scientifically validated, fit for purpose and used within a broader framework alongside traditional data. The FDA said the draft guidance does not address specific NAMs nor does it address the use of NAMs in drug discovery; rather it seeks to encourage the use of NAMs in regulatory submissions.

Federal Judge Rules Against Updated Childhood Vaccine Schedule
A federal judge in Massachusetts issued a preliminary ruling [18] on March 16 blocking changes to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) childhood vaccine schedule and advisory process. The case, brought by the American Academy of Pediatrics and others, challenges the federal administration's efforts to replace independent vaccine experts and alter immunization recommendations without following established scientific and

legal procedures. HHS is expected to appeal the decision.

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 [19] and Actions page 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 [20]
Send email when Published:
No

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-32026

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-32026
[2] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/author/167081
[3] https://x.com/dhsgov/status/2032481817593262119?s=46
[4] https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/nomination-of-the-honorable-markwayne-mullin-to-be-secretary-u-s-department-of-homeland-security/ [5] https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2k8kp7d832o
[6] https://d3opzdukpbxlns.cloudfront.net/34fc0287-fece-4eb6-93ff-53aa23a4f58e/790b043e62a645bbb2a69b885e493483?response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%2A%3DUTF-8%27%27UCAR%2520Complaint%2520%2528FINAL%2529.pdf&response-content-type=application%2Fpdf&Expires=1774008000&Signature=Igm85YAqZp2bKQg5GbnBZ~yT-4YoZDiBS9GCbM5QUSPKbKUaEEWmal9XTl0VQZ7RYmku17ENPd4YT0CAWO7aIAy9yWGPyIN6sYYVaSuQYDlTEn69UfyH~5-H8PadC4tM3Vrq5SE~YveFyP65md-bUMuMbkspTIELmBcURg3kCRhdrQHjlozGlsMlsB0-MZ-exO6OfmKTbJCLo9h-Fc7Qohq7cl9yUlebjLxz7T8QzVLZeofTZJFqHmaORutYRws~JLx1ZH5a9PGnMg2XgEeOKWXyNd7CQ-ro36fJpxKQ__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAI33AGAEAYCXFBDTA [7] https://news.ucar.edu/133061/ucar-statement-lawsuit-filed-against-federal-administrative-agencies
[8] https://www.whitehouse.gov/videos/president-trump-participates-in-a-saving-college-sports-roundtable/
[9] https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/college/2026/03/06/who-is-attending-trump-saving-college-sports-roundtable-nick-saban-tiger-woods-ncaa/88897395007/
[10] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/2026/03/09/white-house-college-leaders-plead-federal-action [11] https://smallbusiness.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=407395
[12] https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/3971/all-actions
[13] https://www.congress.gov/votes/house/119-2/89 [14] https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-172/issue-40/senate-section/article/S751-1 [15] https://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-department-announces-293-million-funding-support-genesis-mission-national-science
[16] https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDOEOS/bulletins/40eb662
[17] https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/general-considerations-use-new-approach-methodologies-drug-development?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
[18] https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mad.286605/gov.uscourts.mad.286605.291.0_2.pdf
[19] https://www.cu.edu/office-government-relations/federal-relations/federal-updates-and-actions
[20] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/tag/federal-weekly-updates