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Federal Government Update - 4.24.26 [1]

April 24, 2026 by Natalie Barry [2]

Dear Colleagues,

Please find a federal government update from our teams.

Senate Advances Budget Resolution to Fund ICE
The U.S. Senate advanced a budget resolution [3] on April 23 to fund U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol. The measure, which is part of a broader effort to resolve the nearly 70-day funding lapse at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), narrowly passed on a 50–48 vote [4]. The resolution directs congressional committees to draft legislation to provide roughly $70 billion over the next three years for immigration enforcement operations. The resolution now heads to the U.S. House for consideration. The House may consider its own budget resolution, which could include additional funding for the ongoing war with Iran, reports [5] *Politico*.

Notably, the budget resolution is also the first step in the budget reconciliation process, which will allow Republicans to pass major fiscal legislation this year by a simple majority, bypassing the Senate's 60-vote filibuster and the need for bipartisan support. The proposal is part of a two-track strategy for DHS funding. While this resolution focuses specifically on ICE and Customs and Border Protection, lawmakers intend to address funding for the rest of DHS in separate legislation with the goal of fully funding DHS by June 1.

Grad PLUS Loans Count Toward Lifetime Borrowing Limit
The U.S. Department of Education (ED) said on April 20 that Grad PLUS loans will count toward the new $257,000 lifetime borrowing limit effective July 1, 2026. This is a reversal from proposed regulations [6] agreed to by the Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) committee, which said the loans, slated to sunset in July, would not apply to the lifetime loan limit. The change is expected to be reflected in the final RISE regulations, which will be published around May 1, reports [7] the National Association of Financial Aid Administrators.

DOJ Extends Online Accessibility Compliance Deadline
The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) announced [8] on April 20 that it is extending the deadline to comply with the *Americans for Disabilities Act* Title II Rule on Web Content and Mobile App Accessibility [9] by one year. The compliance deadline for public entities, including public universities, that serve 50,000 or more people will shift from April 24, 2026 to April 26, 2027. Smaller public institutions will have until April 26, 2028. The rule requires public entities to update their websites and other digital materials to be more accessible for students with disabilities, reports [10] *NPR*.

Higher Education Groups Challenge New DEI Executive Order

A coalition of higher education organizations, including the American Association of University Professors, filed a lawsuit [11] on April 20 challenging the White House's executive order Addressing DEI Discrimination by Federal Contractors [12] issued March 26. The order directs federal agencies to ensure federal contractors and subcontractors do not engage in any "racially discriminatory" diversity, equity, and inclusion activities, including disparate treatment based on race or ethnicity in recruitment, employment, vendor agreements, program participation, or resource allocation. Federal agencies have until April 25 to add the new requirements. The plaintiffs argue the administration's definition is overly broad and could prevent employers from offering lawful programs meant to support workers, reports [13] *Higher ED Dive*.

NIH Continues Modified Peer Review Practices

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) published [14] a notice on April 15 that it will continue select peer review practices implemented during the 2025 government shutdown. Due to the large volume of peer review meetings missed during the 43-day lapse in appropriations, NIH made the following modifications to peer review practices for applications submitted for the January 2026 and May 2026 Advisory Councils: 1) around 30-35 percent of applications will be discussed, (2) applications in the middle third will be designated as "competitive but not discussed" and considered for funding, and (3) summary statements will be simplified.

White House Releases Executive Order on Medicinal Psychedelics Research

The White House issued an executive order on April 18, entitled Accelerating Medical Treatments for Serious Mental Illness [15]. The order aims to speed development, review, and availability of innovative psychedelic-based therapies for individuals with serious and treatment-resistant mental health conditions. The order directs federal agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to take coordinated action to accelerate research and regulatory pathways. The directive also requires HHS to allocate at least $50 million through the Advanced Research Projects for Health (ARPA-H) to support state-led research and collaboration, and to expand clinical trial participation and data sharing across federal agencies and the private sector.

For more information: Executive Order [15], Fact Sheet [16].

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 for up-to-date communications and federal memos.

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Federal Weekly Updates [17]

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