



The Federal Budget and Appropriations Process

Thursday, January 25 - Friday, January 26

Hotel George
Washington, DC

SPEAKER BIOS

Jennifer Castagna, EducationCounsel

Jennifer Castagna is a senior policy advisor at EducationCounsel. She previously served as a Professional Staff Member for the Senate Minority (Republican) Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. In this capacity, Castagna helped oversee appropriations for the U.S. Department of Education, including pre-kindergarten through grade 12, special education, and higher education funding. Prior to joining the Senate Appropriations Committee, Castagna was a Vice President for Washington Partners LLC, a government relations firm primarily focused on serving clients interested in the area of education. She also served as the chief education adviser and appropriations director for a senior U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania for nearly 10 years. Castagna earned a BA in political science and a minor in business from the Pennsylvania State University.

Jason Delisle, American Enterprise Institute

Jason Delisle is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he works on higher education financing with an emphasis on student loan programs.

Delisle started his career on Capitol Hill, first in the office of Representative Thomas Petri, then as an analyst for the Senate Committee on the Budget. His work has led him to study the history and mechanics of federal student loans and other financial aid policies and to recommend budget process reforms for rules covering financial risk in government programs — including working on fair-value accounting for loan programs.

Before joining AEI, Delisle served as director of the Federal Education Budget Project at New America, where he worked to improve the quality of public information on federal funding for education and the support of well-targeted federal education policies. He was also an informal adviser on higher education reform for Governor Jeb Bush's 2016 presidential campaign.

Delisle has a master's of public policy in budget and public finance from the George Washington University and a bachelor of arts degree in government from Lawrence University.

Peter Fontaine, George Washington University

Pete Fontaine has 40 years of experience working in the field of public policy and public administration. Pete spent 30 years working at the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, where he started as an analyst covering energy programs. He later became the manager of CBO's cost-estimating group covering natural resources, transportation, agriculture, housing and insurance programs, and other "general government" issues. He then served as deputy assistant director and as assistant director for CBO's Budget Analysis Division for a total of 15 years, retiring from CBO in 2015. In that management role, Fontaine guided CBO's development of baseline projections and its analysis of the budgetary effects of legislation considered by the Congress.

After leaving CBO, Fontaine has taught a graduate course on Public Budgeting, Revenue, and Expenditure Analysis at the George Washington University's Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration.

Robyn Hiestand, Independent Budget and Policy Consultant

Robyn Hiestand is an independent budget and policy consultant where she provides strategic advice for clients on the federal budget and appropriations process as well as issues related to education finance, data, and policy.

Hiestand spent over eight years at the Senate Budget Committee where she specialized in budget, appropriations, and education policy for Sens. Conrad (D-N.D.), Murray (D-Wash.), and Sanders (I-Vt.). She has drafted key pieces of legislation, including Sen. Sanders' "College for All" Act and Sen. Murray's "In-STATE for DREAMERS," and she took a lead role in drafting and developing the Bipartisan Budget Act (the "Murray-Ryan" budget agreement) to provide sequester relief. In addition, Hiestand developed several annual budget resolutions, provided scoring guidance to relevant committees and worked directly on the education titles of two reconciliation bills — the 2010 Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act and the 2007 College Cost Reduction Act. Before her time in the Senate, Hiestand worked on higher education issues for tribal colleges, where she managed a comprehensive data collection project. She also staffed the House Interior Appropriations subcommittee as a senior legislative assistant for Congressman Martin Sabo (D-Minn.) immediately after college.

A Midwestern native, Hiestand received her bachelor's degree in political science and economics from Augsburg College and her Master's in Public Policy from the London School of Economics.

Justin Humphrey, Congressional Budget Office

Justin Humphrey is a budget analyst for higher education programs and federal student loans in the Budget Analysis Division at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). He is responsible for estimating the federal costs of proposed education legislation and producing multiyear projections of spending for current Department of Education programs.

Prior to joining CBO, Humphrey was an analyst at Mathematica Policy Research, where he participated in large-scale quantitative and qualitative analyses of education programs funded by the Department of Education. Previously, he served as a research analyst in the Office of Federal Programs at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Humphrey received a Master's of Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. He also holds a bachelor's degree in political science and international studies from Northwestern University.

Robin Juliano, House Appropriations Committee

Robin Juliano is a professional staff member on the House Appropriations Committee handling funding issues for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. She previously served on the White House National Economic Council, Senate Appropriations Committee, and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Before entering federal service, Juliano worked at Jumpstart for Young Children. She has an undergraduate degree in history from Brown University and a master's in education policy from the University of Maryland.

Leah Koestner, Congressional Budget Office

Leah Koestner is a budget analyst for the elementary and secondary education programs and the Pell grant program in the Budget Analysis Division at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). She is responsible for estimating the federal costs of proposed education legislation and producing multiyear projections of spending for current Department of Education programs.

Prior to joining CBO, Koestner was a budget analyst in the Arizona Governor's Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting, where she helped develop the Governor's budget proposal for a variety of executive agencies. She also previously worked in fiscal policy at the Brookings Institution.

Koestner received a Master's of Public Policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. She also holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Arizona State University.

MaryEllen McGuire, Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI)

MaryEllen is the President of the Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI). Prior to creating and launching PNPI, she served on the White House Domestic Policy Council as President Obama's senior advisor for education. In this capacity, she focused her efforts on developing and advancing the president's higher education agenda. Apart from her work with the administration, McGuire previously served as the senior education policy advisor to Senator Chris Dodd on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and majority staff director of the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families.

Before her time with Senator Dodd, she worked on education and social policy issues for then-Senator Joe Biden, was the assistant director of research to former First Lady Hillary Clinton, worked for the Connecticut General Assembly, and served as a Connecticut public school teacher. She also served as the director of New America's Education Program from 2008-2009. During her tenure at New America, she developed and lead PNPI until it incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) in 2015.

In 2002, McGuire received her doctorate in politics and education from Teacher's College, Columbia University. In 2016, she was awarded a Distinguished Alumni Award from Teacher's College for her contributions to federal higher education policy.

Nick Lee, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Nick Lee serves as a senior program officer for the U.S. Programs – Policy, Advocacy, and Communications team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In his role, he is responsible for making grants focusing on federal postsecondary policy issues including financial aid, data, and innovation. Lee joined the foundation from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) where he spent over five years formulating and implementing student aid policies for the George W. Bush and Obama Administrations, specifically in regards to the federal government's annual \$180 billion investment in the Pell Grant and student loan programs. Prior to OMB, Lee served at the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Senate with a focus on postsecondary education and social policy issues. A Boston native and life-long Red Sox fan, he received his bachelor's degree in Economics and International Relations from Boston University and a Masters in Public Administration from the George Washington University.

Farouk Ophaso, House Budget Committee

Farouk Ophaso is an analyst on the minority staff of the U.S. House Committee on the Budget where he covers appropriations, education, science, and space. He previously served as the deputy associate director for Legislative Affairs at the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Obama Administration. Ophaso began his federal service as a Presidential Management Fellow with the U.S. Department of Defense and has served as an examiner in the national security division at OMB and as professional staff on the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget.

Ophaso received his master's degree in public policy from the University of Michigan and his bachelor's degree in history from the University of California, Berkeley.

Sharon Parrott, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Sharon Parrott is a senior fellow and senior counselor at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Parrott rejoined the Center in 2017 after serving for two years as associate director for the Education, Income Maintenance, and Labor (EIML) Division at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Parrott previously worked at Center from 2012 to 2014 as Vice President for Budget Policy and Economic Opportunity, focusing on the impact of budget and tax policy on the nation's efforts to reduce poverty and hardship and promote economic opportunity.

Before then, she served as Secretary Sebelius' counselor for human services policy at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from August 2009 until November 2012. At HHS, Parrott was a lead advisor on human services issues, including programs for low-income families and children, children who have been maltreated or are at risk of abuse, seniors and people with disabilities.

Parrott previously worked at the Center from 1993 through August 2009 as the director of the Welfare Reform and Income Support Division and routinely provided technical assistance to federal policymakers, state agency officials, and state-level policy organizations on a range of issues related to welfare reform and the interaction and integration of benefit program rules in Medicaid, Food Stamps, TANF, child care, and SCHIP.

She received both her B.A. in economics and master's degree in social work from the University of Michigan.