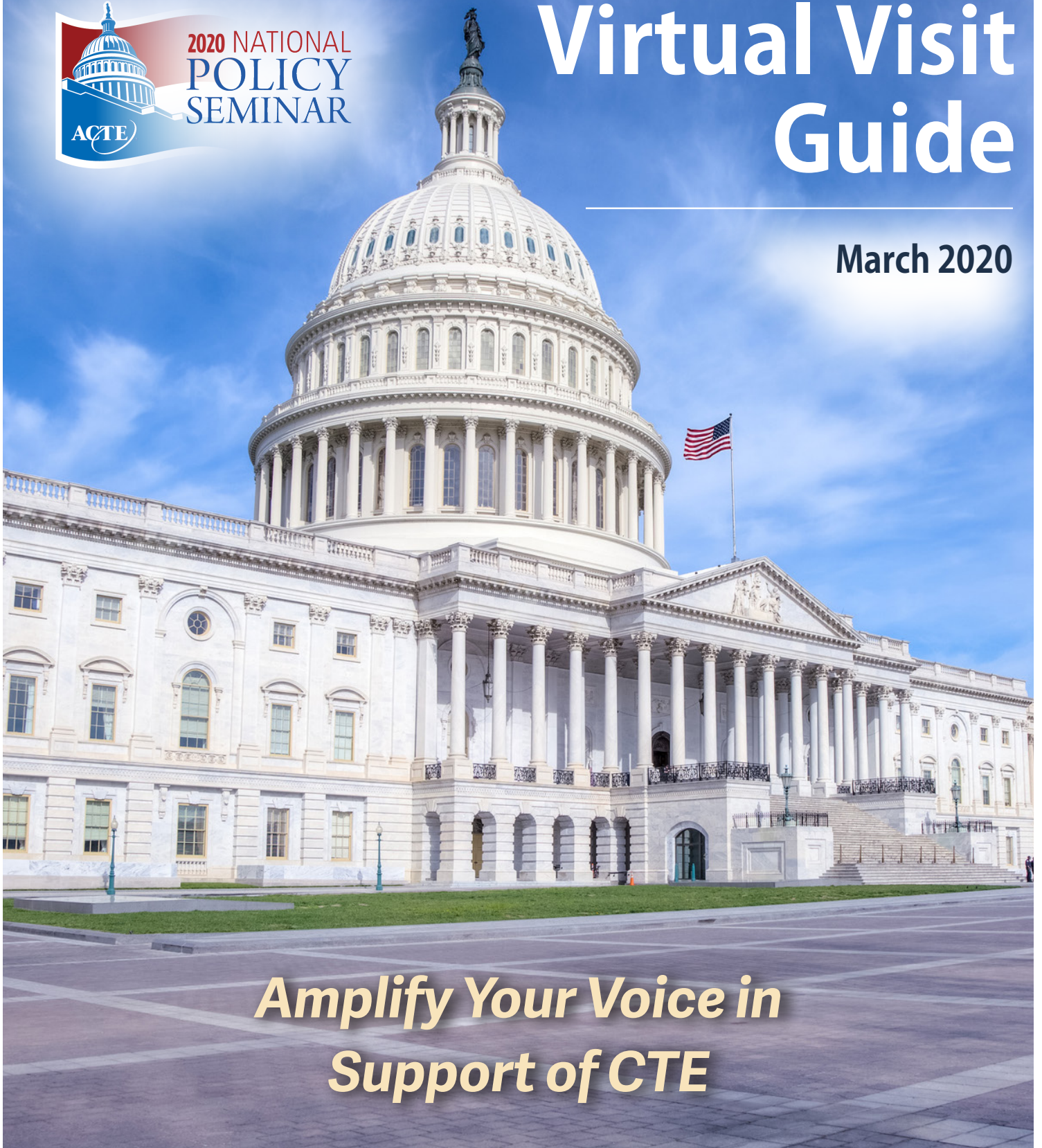




2020 NATIONAL
POLICY
SEMINAR

Virtual Visit Guide

March 2020



*Amplify Your Voice in
Support of CTE*



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Virtual Meeting Process

PHONE MEETING LOGISTICS

In scheduling your meetings, try to get staffers' direct lines. This is particularly important as many congressional offices are working from home, and so calling the main office line may not allow you to connect directly with the staffer.

When on the call, please keep in mind the following best practices:

- If there is more than one participant, explain who is on the call from the outset and clarify who is speaking each time you speak.
- Because you cannot see the staffer directly, it is very important that you try to keep their attention. One way to do this includes asking questions about whether the staffer understands what you are saying.
- Be sure to promptly follow up your call with an email that can include any materials that you'd like to share, including those provided nationally as well as any you had prepared about your state or local programs.
- Be sure to share anecdotes or stories, including how COVID-19 is impacting your CTE program, in addition to the reviewing the issues below. This is what staff are likely to be interested in right now.

If you didn't already have a meeting scheduled when NPS was cancelled, then you can try to schedule one whenever possible. You can look up your senators and representative, along with their office contact information, by [clicking here](#).

If this is your first time calling your Members of Congress, you can [watch this video](#) that sheds some light on the process and includes a (brief) sample of what a phone call might look like.

Visit Outline

Below is an outline that might be helpful to follow on the call:

- A. Introduce yourself and your role in CTE.
- B. Thank the staffer for still finding time to meet amid all of the outstanding COVID-19 issues, and remind them that you had planned to visit their office during ACTE's National Policy Seminar fly-in conference.
- C. Cover the following priorities:
 - a. Highlight and explain CTE programs in your community. Do not assume they are well-versed on what CTE is unless they say otherwise. Include how you are adapting to coronavirus-related closures.
 - b. Ask that education relief continue to be included in coronavirus-related legislation.
 - c. Ensure the policymaker understands that your programs are supported by Perkins.
 - d. Ask that the Member of Congress support funding increases to Perkins.

- e. Explain that you will be following up via email with some additional documents, including ACTE's legislative priorities.
 - f. Ask your Member of Congress to join the CTE Caucus, if they are not a member already.
 - g. Invite your Member of Congress to tour your CTE program in the future once schools reopen.
- D. Ask if they have any questions or if the Member of Congress has any particular priorities in the education/workforce development space.
- E. Thank them for their time.
- F. Send any follow-up materials.

PRIMARY REQUESTS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Coronavirus-related Relief Funds

On Wednesday evening (3/26), the Senate passed the *CARES Act*, a more than \$2 trillion coronavirus-related relief package. The House is scheduled to vote on the package on Friday (3/28). The following summary outlines where things stand as of Thursday, 3/27. However, it is important to check ACTE's dedicated, regularly-updated coronavirus federal activity page, which you can [find here](#), for the latest information before your visit.

Two coronavirus-related bills have already been signed into law. The first provided emergency funding for various federal agencies, and the second expanded paid sick leave and addressed unemployment insurance and COVID-19 testing. Neither of those bills had significant, specific education-related provisions.

The *CARES Act* includes a variety of provisions, from direct assistance to Americans to hospital funding, unemployment insurance, and small business and corporate relief. On the education front, the law allows Federal Work Study payments to continue, doesn't penalize students who dropped out of school from Pell Grant eligibility, allows additional flexibility and deferments on student loans, provides the Secretary of Education with certain waiver authority, provides local workforce boards with additional flexibility under WIOA, and exempts teachers from certain requirements related to TEACH grant obligations or Teacher Loan Forgiveness if they can't finish the teaching year. It also appropriates \$30.9 billion to the Department of Education, including for a stabilization fund for states and local school districts that includes \$13.5 billion in formula funding to states to support needs of elementary and secondary schools and \$14.25 billion in higher education funding to meet a variety of coronavirus-related needs, and more.

ASK: While the full impact of the coronavirus on CTE programs is still yet to be determined, feel free to share any particular challenges that your programs face with your policymakers, and urge them to ensure that any future coronavirus-related legislation includes funding for education and workforce programs, particularly because we anticipate so many people pursuing various credentials to reskill and upskill once we begin to emerge on the other side of the pandemic.

Perkins Funding for Fiscal Year 2021

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 federal budget and appropriations process kicked off in early February with the release of the president's budget request to Congress. In exciting news for CTE, the budget proposal included nearly \$900 million in additional funding directed to CTE. This is composed of a \$680 million, or 53%, increase for Perkins Basic State Grants, bringing the new proposed level to \$1.963 billion. Additionally, it included approximately an \$83 million, or 1112.8%, increase for Perkins National Programs, with a focus on competitive grants for innovation and modernization of programs, and over \$100 million in additional funds that could be generated for Perkins through changes to the H-1B visa program.

The next step in the budget process is for Members of Congress to submit their priorities to the Appropriations Committee, which they do through "Dear Colleague" letters or other mechanisms. To complement the President's historic request, the House Dear Colleague letter for the Perkins Basic State Grant received a record 182 bipartisan cosigners. The Senate letter also received significant support. Now the Appropriation Subcommittees will take the Member requests and begin crafting their appropriations bills.

ASK: It is vital that we continue to reach out to our elected officials to express the critical importance of CTE funding and request they support funding Perkins Basic State Grants at the President's Budget request level of \$1.963 billion in FY 2021. The following talking points might be useful to you as you advocate for Perkins funding:

- Perkins Basic State Grant funds are allocated to all 50 states, and are designed to help ensure all students have the academic, technical and employability skills they will need for career success.
- Perkins funding serves around 12 million CTE students nationwide.
- Perkins funding has not kept pace with inflation, and is several hundred million dollars less than it would be had it just kept pace with inflation over the last 20 years, and that says nothing of the growing demand for these programs.
- Perkins funding is aimed at program improvement, so each investment has a lasting impact.
- [Click here](#) to find a profile of your state, which includes school year 2017-2018 enrollment data, and [here](#) to find state funding levels, including the estimated increase in funding your state would receive under the President's request in FY21.
- Note: Additional facts about return on investment and the success of CTE programs can be found in the documents linked at the bottom of this guide in the resource section.

Joining the CTE Caucus

The CTE Caucus in both the House and Senate is a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers who recognize the importance and value that CTE brings to the American economy. It is free for lawmakers to join the CTE Caucus, and it provides them and their staffs important resources and briefings. It also demonstrates the wide swath of support for CTE. You can check if your senators or representative are members of their CTE caucus by clicking [here for the Senate](#) and [here for the House](#). Additionally, you can share [this flyer](#) with offices who are interested in joining the caucus.

BACKGROUND ON OTHER POTENTIAL LEGISLATION

The following items were at one point on Congress' agenda for the 116th Congress. However, the urgency of addressing the coronavirus pandemic, followed by the lead-up to the 2020 presidential election, makes it exceedingly difficult to imagine that any meaningful progress will be made on the items listed below. However, it may be helpful for you to familiarize yourself with these items should a particular Member of Congress have an interest in it. While we don't anticipate these pieces of legislation crossing the finish line in 2020, continuing to educate and build support for our priorities remains important.

Higher Education Act Reauthorization

The Higher Education Act was first signed into law in 1965 and last reauthorized in 2008. Today's postsecondary education system is fundamentally different than it was even 12 years ago, and so it is critical that an updated law reflect the important role that CTE—including community and technical colleges and area CTE centers—plays in preparing a skilled workforce. Democrats and Republicans have released competing proposals in recent years, with differences largely focused on issues like the cost of postsecondary education, federal financial aid and accountability.

ACTE's top two bipartisan legislative priorities are:

- *JOBS Act* (S. 839/ H.R. 3497): This bipartisan bill would expand Pell Grant eligibility to students enrolled in short-term skills and job training programs that lead to industry-based credentials and employment in in-demand careers. Currently, Pell Grants are arbitrarily limited to essentially semester-long programs, which precludes and/or unnecessarily lengthens some CTE programs.
- *College Transparency Act* (S. 800/ H.R. 1766): This bipartisan bill requires the National Center for Education Statistics to establish a secure data system containing information about postsecondary adults. This would ensure that students and

parents can make informed decisions about programs and outcome history prior to enrolling.

We also hope that Congress keeps in mind the following overarching goals during the reauthorization process:

- ***Reduce barriers to higher education for all:***
 - Expand Pell grant eligibility for short-term training courses and programs by incorporating the bipartisan JOBS Act (S.839/H.R. 3497), and eliminate penalties for working students.
 - Prioritize employment related to field-of-study for work-study participants and allow related work-study to qualify for required internship or apprenticeship credit, as appropriate.
 - Promote innovative, student-centric models like competency-based education and dual enrollment.
- ***Ensure program quality and integrity while reducing data collection burden:***
 - Eliminate the ban on a federal student unit record data system to ease data collection and reporting burdens, by incorporating the College Transparency Act (S.800/H.R. 1766).
 - Include program level information in data systems and track employment outcomes, as well as information on certificates, licenses and industry-recognized certifications earned by students.
- ***Support the development and preparation of CTE educators:***
 - Incentivize CTE teacher preparation program development through HEA Title II funds.
 - Preserve TEACH Grants, educator loan forgiveness programs and other supports for current and future teachers.
 - Establish a scholarship program to prepare CTE teacher candidates and provide funding for the ongoing training and professional development of CTE educators.

National Apprenticeship Act Reauthorization

The National Apprenticeship Act regulates the nation's registered apprenticeships, which result in overwhelmingly positive outcomes for apprentices. House Democrats recently released a reauthorization proposal, though currently it is not bipartisan. ACTE has not taken a position on the legislation, but if you are interested in learning more, you can read the bill's [fact sheet here](#). If apprenticeships come up in your call, you can speak about your own experiences or thoughts, and share that Congress should work to support and expand apprenticeship opportunities, but must be mindful of the importance of maintaining their high quality.

Infrastructure Investments

While unexpected spending around the coronavirus is likely to put significant infrastructure investments on hold, any new investments in infrastructure should also include a commitment to developing the skilled workforce that can design, build, upgrade and maintain it. Jobs in infrastructure require individuals with a range of different skills, competencies and levels of education. Local CTE programs are well positioned to equip students and incumbent workers with the educational opportunities and work-based learning they will need for career success in infrastructure fields. Federal infrastructure legislation should include dedicated resources to develop and expand CTE programs of study that are essential to creating a robust workforce pipeline to rebuild our infrastructure and secure its sustainability for the future.

Additionally, any comprehensive infrastructure proposal should include our nation's public schools, whose average age is nearly 50 years old. The condition of school buildings provides a crucial foundation for classroom learning that affects students and the American economy, which is why their prioritization is critical.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Reauthorization

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the primary federal legislation governing federal workforce development programs. It is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

While ACTE is still working with stakeholders to develop comprehensive priorities, our overarching themes for reauthorization include:

- ***Strengthening connections between education and workforce development systems:*** The law should require a systemic state-level approach involving departments responsible for labor, education, and economic development or commerce. This collaboration can strengthen connections at the local level and create a shared vision across often-disconnected agencies. Further, to ensure cohesion and maximize effectiveness, there must be consistency within the definitions used among the various programs.
- ***Increase access to high-quality training:*** A focus of reauthorization should include providing training services linked to business and industry needs so that individuals are prepared for lifelong careers. Community and technical colleges and area career and technical centers have a critical role to play in this system and should be preferred training providers due to their established quality, wide reach and low cost.

- ***Youth activities:*** During the last reauthorization, WIOA’s youth program focus shifted to out-of-school youth, with the idea that other programs outside of WIOA would compensate for the in-school youth. Unfortunately, that has not been the case and many vulnerable in-school youth are not receiving the resources and services they need to be successful. This reauthorization should ensure that these students are not left behind when it comes to receiving high-quality job training and supports.
- ***Use of Labor Market Information:*** There is already a considerable amount of data available to state and federal agencies, but the systems are not in place to bring the data together in ways that are useful for the public, policymakers and researchers. By ensuring that all labor market information is accessible in user-friendly ways, education and workforce training programs will be able to be more effectively aligned with the needs of the local or regional economy.

RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH POLICYMAKERS

Feel free to share any of the following resources with the congressional offices you meet with:

- [ACTE’s Legislative Priorities](#)
- [CTE Today](#)
- [CTE Return on Investment](#)
- [Sector Sheets](#) (select any relevant)
- [Other Potential Documents](#)