

NASFAA's Off the Cuff Podcast - Episode 212 Transcript

OTC Inside the Beltway: Final Reconciliation Push, and a Packed FSA Conference

Justin Draeger:

Hey everyone. Welcome to another edition of Off The Cuff. I'm Justin Draeger.

Karen McCarthy:

I'm Karen McCarthy from NASFAA's Policy and Federal Relations Team.

Jon Fansmith:

And I am recurring special guest Jon Fansmith from the American Council and Educations Government Relations office.

Justin Draeger:

Welcome Jon. I really liked how you said recurring special guest.

Jon Fansmith:

I'm very special.

Justin Draeger:

I'm fine with that. Well, you're definitely special and we love having you on the podcast. At some point, if we make you just no longer special, but just Jon Fansmith, the regular, do we have to renegotiate our contract with you or ACE?

Jon Fansmith:

Absolutely, yeah. Well with me.

Justin Draeger:

Okay.

Jon Fansmith:

Don't mention it to ACE.

Justin Draeger:

Welcome back from Thanksgiving. Karen, you had a nice Thanksgiving?

Karen McCarthy:

I did, yeah. Pretty low key. Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

You live right on the 95 corridor. So if you live on the 95 corridor, I assume you don't go anywhere.

Karen McCarthy:

Well, yeah. That's why it was low key, because we stayed put, yeah.

Justin Draeger:

Too compressed. On a Christmas or new year's holiday, it's stretched out. But when you've got a half a million people traveling on one highway in three days, it's too nuts.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. Everyone's going at the same time.

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

So you just stay home. Jon, tell me, did you guys go anywhere? You're on the 95 corridor?

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah. No, we didn't go anywhere. I feel bad saying this, but we were going to see my parents. They had to cancel, so we stayed and saw friends and it was wonderful. So I love my family, but it was kind of great to be here and be with friends for Thanksgiving.

Justin Draeger:

I hear you a hundred percent. COVID obviously has been very tough for a lot of people. The one piece that wasn't tough for me though is last year. I did not travel at all for the holidays. And I don't know, there was something about being home that was very nice.

Jon Fansmith:

Oh yeah.

Justin Draeger:

But I also obviously miss family too, so if they're listening. All right, let's jump in. Seems like there's a lot happening as soon as we get back from Thanksgiving. Jon, I want to start with you. Everything going on on Capitol Hill, there were two big things I think we talked about the last time you were here. One is the budget reconciliation bill. The other one was federal funding and keeping the government open. Which of those do you want to tackle first?

Jon Fansmith:

Maybe keeping the government open because there's a little bit more newsy to talk about there.

Justin Draeger:

All right. Is the government going to stay open?

Jon Fansmith:

It looks like the government will stay open. That's the big news as we record this, which is Thursday. There seems to be a deal between the House and the Senate, democrats and republicans, to do a short term CR. They don't have short term. It's three months, but a relatively short term CR into February 18th. So that basically is Congress's way of kicking the deadline down the road a little bit. They're not going to do any actual work on solving funding for the year, but they've given themselves more time, so they'll avert a shut down.

Justin Draeger:

So everybody, party leaders, have signed off on this agreement? Everybody seems to be rowing in the same direction?

Jon Fansmith:

There's still some concern in the Senate. There was a late effort, particularly by conservatives, to derail this because they want to guarantee that the vaccine mandates from the Biden administration will be defunded as part of any deal. It doesn't, at least as we're recording this, look like there will be a sufficient number of republicans to do that. They'll probably have enough votes to move it through the Senate. So it looks like it will go forward.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. So one of the rumors I heard this last week is that republicans were threatening that any program, and this wasn't necessarily directed at Title IV, but any program that is going to see an increase through reconciliation, which we'll talk about in a second, that they would not support then further increases through appropriations this next year. Now, the reconciliation bill doesn't require any republican support if you get all the democrats on board.

Jon Fansmith:

Right.

Justin Draeger:

So tell us a little bit more about that. Is this a legit threat? What does this mean for the student aid programs? Where do we go from there?

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah, it's a legit threat. I've heard that same rumor. Karen and I've talked about this. It's bounced around in a couple places now. It's definitely a threat. How legitimate it will be in terms of affecting the final policy, I think that's still to be determined.

Jon Fansmith:

There's a lot of things that got funded in reconciliation bill, or that would be funded in the reconciliation bill, that are very bipartisan popular. Pell Grants is one of them, right? Is a \$400 increase proposed in both the House and the Senate right now that neither of those are especially bipartisan bills, but they're in both chambers, to \$400 increase for Pell in both of those. So by the Senate's rule, by this rumor anyway, the Senate would say, "No increase to Pell." The chairman of that committee has been a strong proponent of Pell Grants in the past. That's never been one where there's been a huge fight. They do

what they can do on Pell Grants. So it would be a little surprising to me if they follow through on some of these, but you can certainly understand the political motive. They've been locked out of reconciliation. This is a way to maybe get back a little bit of what they see is overspending in some of these areas.

Justin Draeger:

So Pell Grant final amounts for 2022-2023 are far from final at this point. We have this \$500 increase in the reconciliation bill. Then we had potentially another, what, \$400 increase in aprops. That could be a massive \$900 increase, not what we originally hoped for, but still a pretty strong increase. But this doesn't sound like we'll have final Pell numbers till maybe mid-February, late February. Right?

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah. And I mean, even that might be optimistic, honestly. There is a very strong republican sentiment that they simply don't want to do appropriations this year. And there's reasons for this. There's policy reasons. There's political reasons, but there is a lot of interest in simply saying, "When we hit February, we'll do another one of these or we'll just agree that we're not going to be able to do it and we'll just, say for the rest of the year, we'll continue at previous funding levels." Most of that is political. But again, as a minority party in both chambers, you also have very limited tools at your disposal to keep the other party from spending in ways you don't like. This would be one of them, simply withholding your support of any package at least accomplishes a lot of your goals. And frankly, thwarts the other side's goals.

Justin Draeger:

Right. So there's some politics at play here, but this creates a complication for financial aid offices. Karen, you want to talk about how this plays out with Pell schedules?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. I think a lot of our on the ground practicing aid administrators don't pay a lot of attention to the nitty gritty details of the whole appropriation cycle and when things normally happen and the kicking the can down the road, which is how I always describe the CR process. But their ears definitely perk up when I say, "If this bill does not pass or we will not get final Pell numbers for next year." Because even as of right now, we have schools asking us, "Do you know when Pell charts are going to come out for next year?" So I think that is really where the rubber hits the road, I guess I would say, for our members, is that they're very anxious to start packaging and have that final number for next year, for 22-23.

Karen McCarthy:

So I believe though that, Justin, by law, the department has to put some charts out by February 1st, I think it is. So those would be tentative based on what have right now, but they could change based on final numbers later into the spring.

Justin Draeger:

Well Karen, as your memory matched mine, that this isn't the first time that aprops have gone past February 1. And check me here, but I seem to recall in the past the department has published Pell schedules, even when we didn't have final aprops, but I can also remember the department did not.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

Publish Pell schedules. I've seen them go both directions in this.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I don't know. And it feels like the last time that I remember them putting something out and then having to put out revised numbers, that it was actually more. The Pell maximum was higher in the original. So it was definitely still administratively difficult for schools to have to repackage and all of that. But there were more Pell dollars, which who knows how ed might come up with the estimate if they do put one out February 1st.

Justin Draeger:

Right. So the question from schools will be, "At some point, we have to start doing our aid offers." Some schools have already started, obviously. The whole idea of going to prior-prior year was that schools could get aid offers out earlier to those who are doing early admissions. And so it hasn't perfectly lined up.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

The only issue this time around is in the past, we've sort of talked about, "Well, maybe there's going to be a \$100 increase or maybe we're going to have this sort of nominal increase." But this year we're talking about pretty significant numbers, which leaves schools sort of like...

Karen McCarthy:

Right.

Jon Fansmith:

And two different sources.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Jon Fansmith:

Right.

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Jon Fansmith:

You don't know which one might actually happen. So, yeah.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

We'll obviously be talking to the department about this once the CR is passed and we get into later December and January about what their plans are. But schools will naturally be asking, "Which amount should I package with?" And under packaging or underestimating is probably going to be preferable than overestimating, and then not hitting that number because that's going to leave students with gaps.

Karen McCarthy:

Right.

Justin Draeger:

All right. Well, let's move to Build Back Better, which is the reconciliation bill. We talked a lot about this the last time you were on, Jon.

Karen McCarthy:

Yep.

Justin Draeger:

Seems like they're moving pretty close on the democratic side without a single republican vote and ironing out differences. Where are we at?

Jon Fansmith:

I love your optimism. This is also the appropriate time to just remind everyone that when I was last on, I said this would be all wrapped up by Thanksgiving break.

Justin Draeger:

I wasn't going to bring that up, but I'm sure glad you did. We were going to put it in the show notes.

Jon Fansmith:

I was sure you were going to bring it up. So I wanted to preempt you, sort of set the terms at my own.

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Jon Fansmith:

Right. Yeah, so the Senate is tricky, right? The Senate is tricky for everything. The trickiest thing right now is they only have 50 democratic votes. They don't need a republican vote, but that makes every single one of those votes very, very important. And certainly Senator Manchin has been the one who's gotten the most attention, has been sort of most outspoken about what he wants in the bill. Very recently, he's just said he doesn't want to deal with the bill this year. He wants to deal with it next year. It's kind of remarkable to have one Senator dictate the calendar to their leadership, but when you need every single vote, you get to do those sorts of things.

Jon Fansmith:

So there will be some things. There are other things outside of the higher ed world that are big policy disagreements that they still have to sort out in the Senate, paid family leave, the SALT tax provisions. They're working towards negotiation on those. There's proposals going back and forth. Realistically, Senator Manchin may not want to deal with it now. And Senator Schumer may very well want to deal with it in December. The calendar doesn't work for them. I mean, we've got CR. We've got a debt ceiling debate. We've got NDA. We've got all these other big pieces of legislation that are backing up right now that frankly will be higher priority. So by default, Manchin may get what he wants and this bill won't be considered until January.

Jon Fansmith:

That said, once they get there, whatever the Senate agrees on is likely to be the final bill. It's hard to imagine they would change it in such a way that when it goes back to the House, enough of the House would revolt against what they voted on and sent over before. So again, overly optimistic. Maybe by the end of January, we'll see passage, later than everyone's expecting. Certainly it's been a much longer slog than anyone anticipated, but it is moving forward, creeping forward.

Justin Draeger:

And that sort of timeline, end of January, beginning of February, again complicates even further sort of the Pell grant payment schedules and what schools will ultimately need to package with when they start doing most of their aid offers, which will be in late February, March and April for your traditional four year schools.

Justin Draeger:

So I'm curious about whether there is any debate or changes that you would expect on the student aid provision. So we've summarized those in articles and in previous conversations, but what is any controversy there on the Senate side related to the student aid provisions?

Jon Fansmith:

I don't know if I'd say controversy. I think there's a couple things where there's a lot of smoke around them, right, where you could see things changing, and frankly, maybe for the better. The institutional support for HBCUs and TCUs and MSIs. There continues to be a lot of attention to the need for that money. And there's a fair amount in the reconciliation bill already, but there's been demands for additional funding in that area. That case continues to be pressed.

Jon Fansmith:

You could, theoretically, as things get dropped out of what the House sent, that frees up money to add in other places. That's the same thing you hear rumblings around the exclusion of proprietary institutions from the Pell increase. That, in the higher ed world, probably gets talked about the most in policy circles, anyway. And again, that's another one that I think there is concern on the democratic side about restoring that eligibility because that would mean everyone's Pell grant max would drop a little. But again, that's a problem that can also be solved with money. You put more money into it, so that the \$550 remains for every institution, it maybe is a little bit easier to solve. I don't have a lot of sense that there's strong activity in those areas, but that's at least where most of the debate discussion has been.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. So we'll have to see what happens here as the debate moves forward for our part. And NASFAA, and I assume ACE, were saying, "Not as high as we would like, but historic investments, nonetheless. Let's get this done. Let's get it done as soon as possible." Does that summarize ACE's take on this?

Jon Fansmith:

Yes. Spare the presidents and the financial aid administrators anymore headache. Get it done, move on.

Justin Draeger:

That's right.

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

That's right. Okay. Thanks very much, Jon. We'll continue to watch all of that activity. Let's move on. Last week, we had a hearing. Undersecretary James Kvaal was up on Capitol Hill in front of the House of Representatives answering questions. The hearing was supposed to be about HEERF money and how it was spent. Is that right? Jon, any observations from the hearing? Anything notable that came up?

Jon Fansmith:

No. I mean, your recollection is great because it was supposed to be about HEERF money. And I should say, actually it was supposed to be about the elementary and secondary emergency relief money and the HEERF money, basically all the education COVID funding. The amount of time spent actually talking about HEERF funding was pretty minimal, even on the higher ed specific discussion side. So not a lot of discussion about actually how HEERF funds were being spent. What was said, Undersecretary Kvaal made some really good points in the opening about the percentages that had been sent out to students and the percentages that been used for the institutional funds. And there were follow up questions, but there's a lot of time, particularly in the elementary and secondary side where a much smaller percentage of funds, something like 2%, was the number that kept getting brought up during the hearing, has been allocated. And then things like critical race theory and foreign involvement in American institutions and things like that. Not a lot of stuff about the emergency aid. Karen, you might feel differently though.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Karen, any insights?

Karen McCarthy:

I was going to say similar, that you always think they have a topic for these hearings and they always tend to... People bring up whatever it is that they feel like talking about in that particular day. I do remember there was some discussion, I mean, not a lot of detail about the resumption of repayment and James acknowledged this was a very big deal. The servicer transition, the resumption of repayment, I don't recall if the PSLF waiver came up. But those are the three things that I always think about, all these things happening at the same time. So that came up as a concern from some of the members as well.

Justin Draeger:

So I'm curious, Jon. The line of questioning that was there about the hearing topic, like how HEERF spending was going, if you measure how much money schools have sent out relative to where they are in elementary and secondary ed, and there's reasons for this disparity, higher ed looks pretty good, right? We've gotten a lot of money out the door relative to the bureaucracy and challenges that have happened on the elementary and secondary ed side. Do you get the sense though? And I'm thinking about midterm elections. I'm thinking about the House or the Senate changing hands. Do you get that there'll be a lot more oversight from republicans on HEERF spending and whether it was effective and whether it was spent in the way that Congress intended, things like that?

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah. It's a great question. I think in some ways that hearing might have answered that question too, because you looked at the percentages. Higher education actually is doing great. The money has come. If you think about the fact that over 70% of the money came out between January and March of this year, it seems like a long time ago, but it's not a huge time ago. The fact that this was at the end of an academic year instead of the beginning of academic year, all your plans and preparations, you might have used this money for that.

Jon Fansmith:

Schools have done a really good job pushing the money out. What's more, they have really good explanations about why the money they haven't spent hasn't been spent. It's because they see a need for greater mental health services on our campuses. So they're reserving money for the next school year so they'll have those on hand. They have ongoing contracts with people who they might have paid them monthly so they've only covered seven months with such money, but they expect it to last for another year.

Jon Fansmith:

So all of those things are there and you didn't hear republicans actually dive into it. There weren't a lot of like I said, I mentioned critical race theories. Are these funds being used for that? That's not. Are schools wasting the money? I expect good governance from Congress. They're going to look through the reports when everybody starts seeing the reports and starts seeing certain institutions. There are certainly institutions throughout this process, the COVID relief process, that drew the particular attention of republicans. And I have to imagine those schools in particular will get their reports tightly scrutinized, but it doesn't seem to be sort of a broad concern of republicans. Something, again, I think we were a little bit worried that there would be more attention on that subject going into the hearing and it really wasn't that much.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. I agree with you. I saw an audit report out of the California system in the last week or two. It sort of looked at specifically how HEERF funds were spent. And it pinpointed some issues in terms of, if you looked across the California system, that the auditor found that some schools had this methodology and sort of determining need on their campus and distributing funds in another campus within the system determined it a different way. When you do a postmortem, I think you'll always be able to identify things like that but it's always important to weigh that against what was the intent of the funds, which was to get it out as soon as possible. And so, schools were given pretty wide latitude, even in the Trump

administration, and then even wider latitude in the Biden administration, to sort of identify the populations of students that were in need and then get the funds out the door.

Justin Draeger:

So looking back is always 20/20, but at the time it was trying to make sense of changing guidance. It was getting money out to students as quickly as possible. And overall, I'd have to say, "Job well done."

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

There's always room for improvement in a postmortem, but it's sort of like, "Yeah, but at the time we'll remember this the next time there's \$100 billion or \$70 billion pumped into programs in a one year period.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, yeah.

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Jon Fansmith:

But I think the flip side of your question, more oversight from the [inaudible 00:19:26] on this. Look at the questions they did ask. And I think that when you start thinking about, "Will republicans take the House?", there's a lot of cultural, social issue things around education that predominantly have been at the K12 level, but they're there at higher ed. And I think that it's a little bit of a roadmap, at least initially of what we might start seeing if that flip of the House takes place.

Justin Draeger:

All right. Let's turn our attention to the other big thing happening in the financial aid world this week, the federal student aid conference, the second year in a row that this is happening virtually. Karen, before I get into highlights of this year's conference, I should ask, have they talked about whether they're going to go back to in person in the future? Did this come up at all in the virtual realm here?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, it did. A couple of the general session speakers referred to, "Thank you. I'm so glad so many more people could join since we are all virtual." I think I did hear today in comments, "We hope to be back in person next year." But the vibe that I was getting from the first couple days was, "So many more people can participate. I don't know if we'll ever go back to in person." So I was kind of getting conflicting messages. I don't know what you heard, Justin.

Justin Draeger:

No. I mean, I kind of heard everything from, "The access that people have now that it's remote is so much more.", which sort of builds the case to continue the virtual, but maybe there's some room for hybrid in there. I'm just not sure. So that's my thought.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, there was a mention of hybrid too, which I think is the most challenging of all.

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah, as someone who isn't following this, I did see some tweets where people are saying, "This would be so much better if we're in a room and we could hash this out together rather than virtually."

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Jon Fansmith:

So that impulse probably remains for some people.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, I think that's fair. And there is something about getting a couple thousand people together, whether at the NASFA conference, the ACE conference or the FSA conference. There's something to that, but it's certainly much more accessible. And I'll even say for my part, when you have these sessions that you can just sort of tune in while you're in between meetings or you can tune in at night after you've missed some of the recordings, which I'm currently working my way through, Karen, but you've been tuning in. You and the team have been talking about and listening to the sessions on an ongoing basis. What are the standout issues this year at FSA?

Jon Fansmith:

Yeah. So I think my impression is that I feel like with all new faces over there with the new administration, I feel like this is their grand introduction to the financial aid community. So I feel like that will be a new thing, hearing what the new administration is working on, who the people are and what the priorities are. I have heard obviously recovery from the pandemic, equity issues. I've heard multiple people about that being a priority. The student loan resumption of repayment has come up several times, and what the department's plans are there as their next big thing that they are tackling. I haven't been able yet to dive into a lot of the smaller interest sessions. So they have those recorded as well that you can watch on demand. So I've mostly been tuning into the general session so far, but that's what I've been hearing.

Justin Draeger:

There was a general session on FAFSA simplification. Yes?

Karen McCarthy:

Yes, there was.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. So I heard a lot of chatter from our members that maybe some doubt that this simplification will actually be simpler. And I'm wondering, I wasn't able to tune into this session, Karen, but I want you to check me on one of my assumptions. When I hear things like that. I'm sort of like, "Change is always hard."

Karen McCarthy:

Yes. Yes.

Justin Draeger:

So there's that. There's always the upfront change piece. And things will be different, there's no question about that. But I wonder, I don't know who did this session, but when FSA staff are laying something out, sometimes they're not always contextualizing with what we hope the outcomes of something will be or the context in which these changes were all being made, which to some extent, maybe I get. This is FSA, they're doing implementation.

Karen McCarthy:

Yes.

Justin Draeger:

So they're not rehearsing talking points that Congress used when they pass this legislation. So are my assumptions correct there? What was your sense as you listened to the FAFSA simplification session?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I feel like at this point in the game that they are focused on the implementation aspect of FAFSA simplification. So I feel like they present just the facts. "This is what the change is. This is how things will be going forward." And because that's what they're focused on, is the implement stage of it. And so FSA has generally not... I mean, they're not cheerleaders for this in any way or explaining why this is going to be better than what we had before. That's just not the role that they take on. They're really just, "This is what is, this is what we're doing. It will happen at this time. These are what your requirements are." And that's generally their role in the community. I feel like when I present FAFSA simplification, I'm really like, "This is how we got here. This, as we know, are the pain points. This is how this will address some of those pain points. This is the intent behind this, kind of how all the pieces fit together."

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Karen McCarthy:

Because I feel like the FAFSA simplification has to go together with the Future Act and you have to think of them at the same time. And I feel like sometimes those are separated in terms of, "These are the requirements of Future. This is what the FAFSA will do."

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Karen McCarthy:

And yeah, so all of that.

Justin Draeger:

And when NASPA does a session on FAFSA simplification, we're taking 60 to 90 minutes to kind talk through the context and the changes. My sense was this was a shorter one. So it might have just, as you said, just the facts. "Here it is." And this is another two years off, so for a lot of aid folks it might have been like, "Why are we... What?"

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

"Why are we doing... What's happening?" So we'll have much more on this, but I did want to highlight that because I did hear some chatter from the aid community on this one. Karen, a couple other things. I did listen to Richard Cordray, the Federal Student Aid Chief Operating Officer, his general comments at the beginning of the conference. Check me if I'm wrong. Did I hear a new articulation of department policy, which is the department believes that finishing the FAFSA should be a requirement of high school graduation in all 50 states? Did I misinterpret that or did he say that?

Karen McCarthy:

Well, he didn't say it, like "we believe." He encouraged financial aid administrators to do advocacy within their states to push such a requirement forward if they do not already have it. I think he mentioned there are seven states right now that require it for high school graduation.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah.

Jon Fansmith:

Worth mentioning, rumors that he may not be at FSA for long either.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, that was impeccable timing by the Wall Street Journal.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

Who published an article this week that he might be tapped as the top federal regulator of banks. So a real nice timing to kick off the conference.

Jon Fansmith:

Right. I'm sure the press people are happy at ED.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, right. Thanks very much, Jon. Always appreciate having you on.

Jon Fansmith:

Always good to be on.

Justin Draeger:

Thank you. Yep, I should point out that Jon hosts another podcast over at ACE. You want to tell us just a little bit about that podcast?

Jon Fansmith:

Sure. The podcast is called dotEDU and it's me and my government relations colleague, Sarah Spreitzer and ACE's Chief of Staff, Mushtaq Gunja. And we have interesting, fascinating people like you, Justin, on to chat about things going on in higher ed policy. So it's every couple weeks and you should definitely subscribe to it on multiple accounts, like it feverishly and say good things about me in the comments.

Justin Draeger:

Will do. Thank you very much, Jon. And people should go over and check out that podcast with Jon Fansmith and the rest of the ACE Government Relations Team and Policy Team. So check that out. Karen, thanks very much.

Karen McCarthy:

Of course.

Justin Draeger:

Owen, let's turn back to the news over the last week or two. What's happening?

Owen Daugherty:

Yeah. Thanks, Justin. In recent weeks, it seems like a lot of focus has been on getting the student loan apparatus prepared for payments to start. In fact, actually during this recording, I missed a call from my student loan servicer. So, I think it's easy to forget, that it's December and student loan payments are coming back in February. Payments have been paused for nearly two years due to the pandemic. And there's a general sense that borrowers will need some help getting ready to make these payments again.

Owen Daugherty:

At the annual Federal Student Aid Training Conference this week, Richard Cordray and other officials consistently were urging financial aid professionals to play a role in helping raise awareness. They detailed a lot of ways aid offices can help spread the message and highlighted a resource toolkit full of messaging for aid administrators to use.

Justin Draeger:

So people can check out, obviously, Today's News and the show notes for links to some of our summaries there and how they can get involved in informing their borrowers that repayments are about to resume. Anything else going on on Capitol Hill that we haven't talked about today?

Owen Daugherty:

Yeah, just along those same lines with the student loan payments. Senator Elizabeth Warren and some other top Senate democrats are pushing the Department of Education to return defaulted student loan

borrowers to good standing before payments resume in February. We haven't heard anything yet from the department on this, but the senators are urging them to act swiftly, as payments are set. So we'll keep you updated with any news on that front, should it happen.

Justin Draeger:

This sort of falls along the lines of this Operation Fresh Start that Politico reported on a while ago, right? This idea of we're going to take the defaulted borrowers and bring them up into good standing and sort of start over now. Make your payments or get into a qualified deferment or income based repayment. So Owen, we are publishing all week articles summarizing what's going on in federal student aid. Some of the latest and breaking news. People can check that out. And I assume we'll put a link in the show notes. Yes?

Owen Daugherty:

That's right. Yeah. We'll have everything in the show notes and we'll keep publishing all the coverage in Today's News. Certainly a busy time as the holidays approach.

Justin Draeger:

All right. Thanks very much Owen. And thank you everyone for listening. I hope you had a great Thanksgiving. We're looking forward to a great December ahead. Remember to send us your comments. Remember to subscribe. Tell a friend. Leave us a positive view and we will see you again very, very soon.