

**Minnesota Congressional Delegation Education Liaison Meetings
Washington, D.C.
September 13-15, 2022**

Purpose: Due to the pandemic, Minnesota State was unable to have in-person meetings in Washington, D.C. to advocate for higher education issues and congressionally directed spending. During this time, meetings were held via Zoom.

Sarah Berns, Director of Federal Relations and Advocacy and Melissa Fahning, Director of Legislative Communications traveled to D.C. with a focus on relationship development with the congressional offices, and to discuss issues important to Minnesota State.

Agenda:

- Open Textbook Pilot program update
- Fiscal Year 2023 Congressionally Directed Spending/Community Project Funding
- Short-term Pell expansion
- Biennial budget listening sessions and state legislative issues
- Other issues of interest to the Education liaison and member

Note: District 8 Congressman Pete Stauber's Legislative Assistant Andrew Morley had to cancel at the last minute due to floor activity. Education staff for Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, District 5, was unable to meet.

Congressman Brad Finstad, District 1

Meeting: Ryan Altman, Legislative Assistant

Additional topics discussed:

- Congressman Finstad is looking forward to serving on the House Committee on Education & Labor. He is also serving on the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee.
- Discussed Student loan forgiveness - Minnesota recipients will be taxed unless the state legislature passes legislation that aligns the state tax code with the federal tax code.
- Shared the Congressionally Directed Spending/Community Project Funding project requests and discussed the possibility of Congressman Finstad supporting projects in District 1 if the submittal process continues
- Discussed the state legislature and the possibility of a special session

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book

Congresswoman Angie Craig, District 2

Meeting: Skylar Borchardt, Legislative Assistant

Additional topics discussed:

- Thanked him for the Congresswoman's support on Community Project Funding
- Discussed the Congresswoman's most recent visit to Dakota County Technical College to view the driving track and learn more about the law enforcement program
- Congress passing a continuing resolution through the end of the year
- Status on the appropriations bill
- Student loan forgiveness - Minnesota recipients will be taxed unless the state legislature passes legislation that aligns the state tax code with the federal tax code. We discussed the bipartisan support for the legislative change.
- Possibility for a state legislative special session, and the legislation that was moving forward in the 2022 legislative session, specifically around law enforcement and public safety
- Economic Mobility Grant: Skylar asked about the grant program he recently learned from local constituents modeled after the program at Pine Technical and Community College. There are seven programs at Dakota County Technical College including; Commercial Driver's License, HR Certification and Certified Nursing Assistant.
 - Follow-up includes: number of students participating in the program at Dakota County Technical College. Skylar also wants to learn how the program is going overall.

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book
- Economic Mobility Grant information
- Enrollment numbers for Inver Hills Community College and Dakota County Technical College

Congressman Dean Phillips, District 3

Meeting: Beverly Hart, Legislative Director

Additional topics discussed:

- Congressman Phillips' office is focused on Public Service Loan Forgiveness and student loan forgiveness.
- Congressman Phillips supports the Pell grant issues that have been moving through Congress, including short-term Pell and doubling the Pell.
- Discussed the student loan forgiveness issue - Minnesota recipients will be taxed unless the state legislature passes legislation that aligns the state tax code with the federal tax code.
- Talked about the STEAM event at the Mall of America that Congressman Phillips attended
- Extended an invitation to visit or hold events at a campus in the Congressman's district

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book

Congresswoman Betty McCollum, District 4

Meeting: Sophia Schilling, Legislative Assistant

Additional topics discussed:

- Congresswoman McCollum's office is focused on ensuring information regarding student loan forgiveness gets to those who would benefit from it. They are also aware of, and concerned about, the tax liability issue in Minnesota, and will be communicating with Governor Walz's office.
- Sophia said Congresswoman McCollum's number one priority is passing the budget before the new year. Sophia shared that a continuing resolution will be passed through mid-December, and they anticipate a budget approved by January 1, 2023.
- Sophia has been hearing from industry groups about the need to connect programs and certifications with in-demand institutions. She is learning that there is a need for quick turn-around programs. Example given: long haul truckers. We shared with Sophia that we will work with her to connect her with Larry Lundblad and Mary Rothchild to ensure connections are made between campuses and industry.

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book
- Workforce contacts

Congressman Tom Emmer, District 6

Meeting: Liz Stinebaugh, Legislative Assistant

Additional topics discussed:

- Discussed Community Project Funding in the Congressman Emmer's district. During the fiscal year 2023 process, Congressman Emmer advanced projects related to transportation. We discussed possibilities of funding higher education projects in his district.
- Congressman Emmer's focus is on K-12 mental health, and he will be introducing a bill in late October. The bill works to expand behavioral health specialists and school-based behavior health.
- Discussed the appropriations process and Liz indicated they believe the bill will be done by December.
- Student loan forgiveness - Minnesota recipients will be taxed unless the state legislature passes legislation that aligns the state tax code with the federal tax code.

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book

Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach, District 7

Meeting: Meghan Plotz, Legislative Assistant

Additional topics discussed:

- Higher education is new to Meghan's portfolio, so we discussed many different higher education issues in general

- Meghan is interested in background information on the Open Textbook Pilot grant program Minnesota State was awarded in fiscal year 2021.
- We discussed the importance and expansion of Short-term Pell, including details of the provision in the COMPETES Act of 2022. She would like to receive any further information on the Pell grant
- Discussed Student loan forgiveness - Minnesota recipients will be taxed unless the state legislature passes legislation that aligns the state tax code with the federal tax code.
- We offered to host the Congresswoman on any of the campuses in her district

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book
- Open Textbook Pilot program grant information
- Pell grant information

Senator Amy Klobuchar

Meeting: Max Hurst, Legislative Assistant

Additional topics discussed:

- Senator Klobuchar is focused on community colleges and programs that reskill
- The Senator's priorities include:
 - Doubling the Pell Grant
 - Short-term Pell Grant
 - Improving the Pell Grant process
 - Expanding accessibility to reskilling programs
 - Making two-year community college free
 - Workforce development
- Senator Klobuchar wants to learn more about what grant programs are working in Minnesota and could be replicated in other states
- Discussed the Higher Education Act reauthorization, and the likelihood of it passing
- Senator Klobuchar likes to be on campus – most recently toured Hennepin Technical College – offered to host the Senator at any time
- Max is interested in learning what themes emerge from the statewide biennial budget listening sessions
- Max is interested in systemic issues and trends we're seeing in higher education and offered to help with messaging of these issues and trends.

- The issue of Next Gen and the possibility of asking for funding through the Congressionally Directed Spending process was discussed. Max advised we ask for a subset of the project cost that funds something specific and tangible.

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book
- Listening session themes

Senator Tina Smith

Meeting: Amy Zhou, Legislative Assistant

(Meeting was originally scheduled with Brennan Barber, Senior Education, Labor & Housing Policy Advisor, but he had a last minute emergency)

Additional topics discussed:

- With Amy's background as a state legislative assistant, we discussed what is happening in Minnesota, including the 2022 legislative session, and the possibility of a special session.
- Student loan forgiveness - Minnesota recipients will be taxed unless the state legislature passes legislation that aligns the state tax code with the federal tax code. We discussed the bipartisan support for the legislative change.
- The issue of Next Gen and the possibility of asking for funding through the Congressionally Directed Spending process was discussed. Amy advised that we work with Brennan Barber to determine if there's a path forward to receive federal funding for Next Gen.

Follow-up information:

- Earmark Packet
- Listening Session handout
- Minnesota State Guide Book