

# News From The States

# EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

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I've got the vaunted newsletter triple play for you today: Not one, not two, but *three* themes. Environment! Schools! Elections! (My computer desperately wants me to be writing about electrons, probably because it clocked the one-two punch of environment and schools!) It is oodles of content and we're burning daylight (and fossil fuels), so let's hop to it.



## The Big Takeaway

We talked about schools [yesterday](#), and we're back in the classroom today — specifically, a (hypothetical) classroom in rural New Hampshire, where school districts are struggling to address historic shortages of educators. Teacher shortages are nothing new for the state (or [the country](#)), but the situation is particularly dire in poor and rural districts, where salaries are limited by budget constrictions that simply don't exist in wealthier areas, [the New Hampshire Bulletin reported](#).



*Class dismissed...?*  
(Photo by Getty Images)

**This, like so many other things, is a long-standing problem exacerbated by the pandemic.** Record numbers of educators have left the profession since 2020, citing health concerns, remote instruction, political battles and an ever-increasing workload, among other factors. The exodus shows no signs of slowing. In [at least six states](#), departures in 2022 were higher than any year on record.

The turmoil crunched an already competitive hiring market, giving teachers plenty of leeway to leave their schools for better-paying opportunities in wealthier areas. In New Hampshire, that's left poorer districts — where starting pay for new teachers can be as low as \$30,000 — at a distinct disadvantage, both in terms of staffing levels and student performance. Incentives like student loan repayment programs can help level the playing field, but most districts can't afford them.

**But that may change soon.** A state legislative panel on Monday gave unanimous approval to a [proposed grant program](#) that would repay “all or part of” outstanding student loans for teachers working for a minimum of four years in designated rural areas or districts with fewer than 20 students per square mile.

(Under those criteria, 104 districts would be eligible.) Qualifying teachers would receive increasing repayments over a four-year period, with a maximum payout of \$12,000. The state would fund the program for two years, with additional allocations subject to legislative approval in future budget cycles, according to the bill, which moves next to the Senate. [At least 25 states](#) have approved similar incentives, which advocates described as key recruitment tools for cash-strapped districts.

“Today’s unanimous, bipartisan vote in support of the establishment of a rural and underserved area educator incentive program is an important step toward boosting the pipeline of future public school educators,” Megan Tuttle, president of the National Education Association of New Hampshire, said in a statement.



*LSU President William Tate has seen the numbers, and they are not great!  
(Photo by JC Canicosa/Louisiana Illuminator)*

**The data is similarly grim in Louisiana**, where higher education budgets will live or die by the fate of a 0.45% sales tax slated to expire in 2025. If lawmakers renew or replace it, everything’s gravy. If they don’t, statewide revenues will fall by an estimated \$400 million, leaving colleges and universities subject to the whims of a budget process that affords them no constitutional or statutory protection, [the Louisiana Illuminator reported](#).



“If your antennas are up, you’re paying attention to what we’re going to be able to pull off in terms of working with the legislature and the governor-elect,” said LSU President William Tate. “A lot of it will depend on the tax policy.”

**The looming financial cliff comes at a particularly inopportune time** for the state’s universities, which are facing a dropoff in enrollment. (This, much like the teacher shortage, is a national trend that predates the pandemic but [has accelerated](#) since its onset.) By 2029, the number of college-going students in Louisiana is expected to decline by as much as 15%, according to a [report released this year](#) by the Public Affairs Research Council. Fewer students on campus means less tuition and general revenue, which could be catastrophic amid larger budget cuts, Tate said.

“And so the fact of the matter is the budgets depend on us to be able to manage enrollment extremely well, in a time where there is a decreasing number of students who might be participating in higher education,” he said. “We need good tax policy for us to flourish.”



*Lincoln, Nebraska, where funding concerns are for plebes and non-chancellors.  
(Photo by Getty Images)*

**Budget cuts are far less of a problem at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln,** provided you are the chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Weeks after proposing \$12 million in funding reductions — on top of a system-wide [\\$58 million shortfall](#) — UNL Chancellor Rodney Bennett quietly expanded his office

staff by reviving two positions and then tapping his former colleagues to fill them, [per the Nebraska Examiner](#).

The positions — directors of university relations and external relations — existed under previous administrations but had been discontinued before Bennett started in July. Reinstating them was a tactical step in the larger process of building “a team designed for success,” according to Leslie Reed, a spokeswoman for the university.

“As Chancellor Bennett assembled his team, he made a strategic decision to hire a director of external relations and a director of university relations to help him achieve his goals for UNL,” Reed said in a statement.

[Ernest “E.K.” Franks](#), UNL’s director of university relations as of Nov. 1, and [Brian Morrison](#), incoming director of external relations, are two of four new hires who worked with Bennett during his 10-year tenure at the University of South Mississippi. Franks and Morrison will make \$180,000 apiece, paid via undisclosed private funding. (The other two hires — [Dee Dee Anderson](#), the university’s new vice chancellor for student affairs, and [Jim Coll](#), chief communications and marketing officer — make [substantially more](#), though still less than their predecessors.)



The old-but-new roles are two of 21 positions that would be funded privately under Bennett's budget recommendations, which also call for the elimination of at least eight full-time staffers, 15 vacant positions and roughly \$1.4 million in funding for student teaching assistants and temporary lecturers. Those cuts are likely to increase an already heavy workload for staff and faculty, according to Sara Haake, UNL Staff Senate president.

"The University of Nebraska-Lincoln staff are exceptional and dedicated individuals," Haake said in a statement. "The involuntary loss of a single staff member has a ripple effect on the workplace."

She declined to comment on the staffing expansion in Bennett's office.

**Speaks for itself, really:** [Federal agencies to offer free COVID tests to schools; will DeSantis, FL Surgeon General go for it?](#) ... [Indiana teachers union presses reticent state lawmakers to reopen budget in 2024 session](#) ... [LSU faculty, staff take aim at retirement disparity](#) ... [Nevada Board of Regents to consider higher ed student fee and tuition increase to pay for raises](#) ... [UNC System Board of Governors elects next chancellor of UNC-Asheville](#) ... [Testimony on Ohio's proposed higher ed overhaul shows more than 130 opposed and 14 in support](#) ... [Oklahoma's private school tax credits to launch Friday with influx of applicants expected](#) ... [27 Virginia high school teachers called out of work after student violence. Was it a strike?](#) ... [Native and state leaders push for Washington's K-12 schools to fully implement tribal history curriculum](#) ... [West Virginia school district to implement solar power](#)



### Also Trending

Federal officials are prepared to remove four dams in Oregon's lower Snake River in hopes of boosting imperiled salmon populations, according to leaked documents from a federal lawsuit. The proposal, reported Tuesday by an [online news site](#) and then released Wednesday by unhappy Republicans, would invest at least \$1 billion in habitat restoration and alternative energy development on tribal lands in the Columbia Basin, [per the Oregon Capital Chronicle](#).





*Dam, no spawning here.  
(Photo via the Oregon Capital Chronicle)*

The 34-page document is the product of more than two years of negotiations between the federal Council on Environmental Quality, the Biden administration’s environmental advisers and 10 environmental groups that sued the federal government over its dam operations. The dams marked for removal provide irrigation and emissions-free hydropower for nearby communities, but they also contributed to the near extinction of 13 salmon and steelhead species that return to the river to spawn.

**The draft proposal was unequivocal** in its conclusion that “business as usual — and the consequential disappearance of salmon and other native fish populations in the Columbia River Basin – is unacceptable.”

“The science is clear,” the report’s authors continued, “and now so too must be our path forward.”

**But it was far less clear to congressional Republicans** from Idaho and Washington, who cited the proposal’s “use of vague and imprecise language” [in a letter](#) requesting clarity from President Joe Biden on Wednesday.

“It is imperative that our constituents, whose livelihoods depend on the Columbia River system, have a comprehensive understanding of this document’s contents,” they wrote, “so they can anticipate and prepare for the wide-ranging

impacts that will inevitably be felt across the region should the commitments detailed in this document be realized.”

A spokesperson for Earthjustice, the nonprofit representing the plaintiffs, declined to comment on the proposal, saying she could not “provide any detail beyond what is in the filings with the court.”

**See you in court:** [Ahead of climate conference, U.S. House panel tussles over curbs on emissions](#) ... [President in stop at Colorado wind tower factory touts ‘Bidenomics,’ blasts Boebert](#) ... [For Connecticut towns struggling to deal with flooding, help is on the way](#) ... [More states are banning plastic bags. Florida is not among them](#) ... [Northeast Iowa cheese producer fined for wastewater violations](#) ... [EV battery company eyes Louisiana for new facility](#) ... [Maine energy committee rejects water contract bill after Poland Spring lobbying effort](#) ... [EPA withdraws consent for Chemours to export GenX from Netherlands to North Carolina](#) ... [Warm Springs tribes challenge Oregon resort development over treaty rights](#) ... [ProvPort inks deal to develop, fund Rhode Island marine terminal](#) ... [Q&A: Carbon pipeline execs say future of South Dakota ethanol industry hangs in the balance](#) ... [Climate change, costly disasters sent Texas homeowner insurance rates skyrocketing this year](#)



**State of Our Democracy**

Republicans on Thursday stormed out of a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing to protest/avoid a vote to authorize subpoenas for two high-profile GOP operatives after other stall tactics — like introducing 177 unrelated amendments — failed to waylay the proceedings, [our D.C. bureau reported](#).

Nevertheless, the Democratic-majority committee persisted, voting 11-0 to subpoena billionaire Republican donor Harlan Crow and [judicial puppetmaster Leonard Leo](#) as part of an ethics investigation into undisclosed financial ties to U.S. Supreme Court justices. Predictably, Republicans then cried foul, claiming the vote violated a committee rule that requires at least two members of the minority to be present for a quorum during committee business. I assume your eyes are glazing over, which is the point: Nobody cares!

...Except for Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), whose role in Congress essentially boils down to Performatively Caring About Things Sometimes. Examples include:



[Power grabs](#), [insurrections](#), [Joe Biden](#), and apparently also The Rules, insofar as they might get Democrats, specifically, in trouble.



*Upset, probably.*

*(Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)*

To wit: “I think they violated the rules,” he said Thursday on his way to the Senate chamber.

Graham does [not appear](#) to have similar concerns over the disclosure rules for the Supreme Court, which have been flouted repeatedly by several justices, including stalwart conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, who never thought to mention the [various vacations](#) and [real estate dealings](#) he had with Crow. Graham seems similarly unconcerned with Leo and Crow’s refusal to comply with the congressional probe, thus necessitating the subpoena vote in the first place. For whatever reason, *those* rules don’t matter, leaving Graham free to slam the related investigation as “garbage” and “politically motivated.”

**Per the committee rules, Graham could contest the vote**, though Democrats have maintained that they had a valid quorum. But it probably won’t matter. Crow and Leo are unlikely to testify even if they are subpoenaed, mostly because they are exceedingly wealthy and thus have no reason to subject themselves to

hostile questioning about how they use their wealth. A spokesman for Leo did not provide a comment in response to Thursday's vote, but Crow's office dismissed it as "invalid," even as it pledged his continued cooperation (as long as that doesn't include testifying).

"Despite the unenforceability of the subpoena, Mr. Crow remains willing to engage with the Committee in good faith, just as he has consistently done throughout this process," the statement read. "Mr. Crow offered extensive information responsive to the Committee's requests despite his strong objections to its necessity and legality."

**Super good faith:** [Buttigieg says former President Carter encouraged him to drop out of the 2020 presidential race ... Democrats, voting rights activists pan Georgia GOP lawmakers' revised legislative districts ... Louisiana Legislature gets time to draw congressional map in third redistricting session ... Politicos make final decisions ahead of North Carolina candidate filing ... Oregon Secretary of State Griffin-Valade won't block Trump from ballot ... Federal lawsuit filed over new Tennessee law requiring polling places to warn voters against voting in the 'wrong' primary ... A Texas politician wants to provide emergency services to constituents who don't have them. Will they let him?](#)



## From The Newsrooms

- [Abortion opponents push state lawmakers to promote unproven 'abortion reversal'](#)
- [More than 342,000 Ohioans have lost their Medicaid coverage since April](#)
- [Tennessee AG leads multi-state fight against federal protections for LGBTQ foster youth](#)
- [Small meat processors say USDA measures don't address consolidated industry's root problems](#)
- [Investigation launched into site selection process for new FBI headquarters in Maryland](#)



## One Last Thing

Wolverines [are officially listed](#) as "threatened" under the Endangered Species

Act, because I guess the Endangered Species Act doesn't watch [college football](#). ヽ\_(ツ)\_/

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