

## **ISSUE Brief: #1**

January 29, 2018

Dear Education Reporter:

After immigration, infrastructure is the next big thing on the Congressional agenda. **And yes, there's a major schools hook.**

### **10 things you need to know:**

**1. President Trump has made infrastructure his next big legislative priority.** In his Election Night victory speech, the President declared, "We are going to fix our inner cities and rebuild our highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, schools, hospitals." He's likely to use his upcoming State of the Union Address Monday, January 29, to announce his long-awaited infrastructure initiative; we're waiting to see if President will deliver on his promise.

**2. Growing Congressional support to include public schools in any infrastructure package.** Over 150 House members support a [bill](#) introduced by Rep. Bobby Scott (VA), and 25 Senators have signed on to a similar [bill](#) from Sen. Jack Reed (RI). Both bills would provide \$100 billion in federal grants and school construction bonds over the next 10 years; and would create an estimated 1.8 million construction jobs nationwide.

**3. Scale of the issue:** Public schools are the second largest public sector of America's infrastructure, after roads and highways. Each weekday, 1 in 6 Americans -- over 50 million children and adults -- sets foot in a public school.

**4. The need for federal support is urgent:** Local communities and states are currently spending \$49 billion a year to build and modernize public school facilities; but that's \$38 billion a year less than they need. This \$38 billion investment gap impacts education, health, safety, security, and the environment.

**5. Funding support varies greatly.** Some states provide a lot of support for school facilities. But 12 states provide none. And other than some modest FEMA spending to help rebuild after natural disasters, there are NO federal facilities funds for even the poorest school districts.

**6. Inequity built into the system:** 80% of facilities funding comes from local property taxes, which leads to huge disparities. Cities and rural areas are particularly impacted. Over 6 million rural students impacted by lack of high-speed broadband.

**7. School buildings get a D+ grade.** The [American Society of Civil Engineers](#)

recently gave public school buildings an overall grade of D+ in its 2017 report card, and found that about one in four of the country's school buildings are in fair or poor condition.

**8. There has been some great media coverage already on this issue such as:** *Ed Week's* November 2017 [special issue](#), this week's story from [The Roanoke Times](#), a recent roundup by the [AP](#), and ongoing coverage by the [Baltimore Sun](#) about that city's recent catastrophe.

**9. A new coalition is launching Monday, Jan. 29 to mobilize support for school facilities funding.** The [Re]Build America's School Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC) is a committed group of non-partisan organizations and individuals who support federal funding to modernize and build public school facilities, an effort that would also maintain control by local school districts with the support of states. (Separate press release to come.)

**10. Learn more.** Our website, to be launched Monday, will include state-by-state maps showing 1) the current investment gaps, and 2) how much each state would get in funding and jobs with \$100 billion in the infrastructure bill. Meanwhile, the best source of information is our [2016 State of Our Schools Report](#) and state data. Our [infographic](#) offers a one-page summary.

Or contact Mary Filardo at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund ([MFilardo@21csf.org](mailto:MFilardo@21csf.org)) or Alex Donahue at the National Council on Education Facilities ([ADonahue@21csf.org](mailto:ADonahue@21csf.org))