



# CONGRESSWOMAN DEBBIE LESKO

PROUDLY SERVING ARIZONA'S 8TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

## Frequently Asked Questions Education and Student Loans from the CARES Act

**Q: Governor Ducey announced on March 30, 2020 that all Arizona schools are closed for the remainder of the 2020 school year. What does that mean for my family and children?**

**A:** *Both the federal and state government have taken numerous actions regarding school closures.*

- *The U.S. Department of Education is providing waivers for federal testing requirements to states that have had to close schools.*
- *The White House worked with the private sector to launch a central website where families, students, and educators can access online education technologies.*
- *Governor Ducey recently signed legislation that provides flexibility and guidance on graduation requirements and continued learning opportunities.*

**Q: I am a teacher at an Arizona public school. Will I be able to continue to be paid during the school closures?**

**A:** *A public school will continue to pay all its employees, including hourly employees, for the duration of the statewide closure if employees: (1) commit to being available during work hours and (2) are able to perform tasks remotely. If an employee is unable to work remotely, schools shall re-assign the employee other tasks they can perform. Legislation recently passed by the State of Arizona allows for schools to continue paying contract workers. Contractors should talk with their contract company and schools to ensure continuity in pay.*

**Q: Are my students required to make-up school days missed due to school closures?**

**A:** *Schools are not required to extend the number of school days or add additional instructional hours after the statewide closure ends.*

**Q: Will my student still be required to take any of the mandated statewide tests this school year?**

**A:** *All statewide assessments for the 2019-2020 school year are cancelled.*

**Q: My student receives special education services, what do the school closures mean for my student?**

**A:** *During the 2019-2020 school year, public schools may deviate from the statutory requirements relating to special education programs. Public schools shall attempt to ensure that each student who has a section 504 plan or who receives special education services through an individualized education program (IEP) has access to these educational opportunities. For more information on providing special education services during school closures, visit the Arizona Department of Education Special Education COVID-19 webpage by [clicking here](#).*

**Q: With schools being closed, what does this mean for students who received free or reduced priced lunch at school?**

*A: Congress recently passed additional funds and flexibilities for schools to continue to provide meal services to students. In partnership with the AZ Health Zone, meal service locations can be accessed through a mapping tool [here](#). You can also access the same information by texting the word FOOD to 877877. For a complete list of school meal services you can click [here](#).*

**Q: With schools being closed, are there learning resources available for parents to use with their students?**

*A: The Arizona Department of Education's Virtual Learning Hub is a resource for teachers and families to assist them as they plan for non-traditional home instruction and should be used with discretion and in the way that best fits with their families' or student's needs. You can access these resources through the Arizona Department of Education by [clicking here](#) or [here](#).*

**Q: I am a veteran using GI benefits to pay for my education. What flexibility exists for me to ensure that I am compliant with my program?**

*A: President Trump recently signed legislation to provide continuity in educational benefits for veterans and their families who attend schools that have had to switch to online learning. The law enables the VA to continue providing the same level of education benefits to students having to take courses online due to the coronavirus outbreak. GI Bill students will continue receiving the same monthly housing allowance (MHA) payments they received for resident training until December 21<sup>st</sup>, or until the school resumes in-person classes. Students receiving GI Bill benefits are not required to take any action. Benefits will continue automatically. Students with specific questions can contact the Education Call Center at: 888-442-4551.*

**Q: I am a student at a college or university. How will my graduation or continuation of classes be impacted?**

*A: The Department of Education has given broad approval to colleges and universities to allow them to more easily move their classes online. You should reach out to your college or university for more information about adjustments being made.*

**Q: I have student loans and I am having trouble paying them due to the coronavirus. What resources are available to help with this?**

*A: The U.S. Department of Education has set interest rates on all federally-held student loans to 0 percent for at least the next 60 days. No action is required for student borrowers to take advantage of this interest rate. The Department of Education announced borrowers will have the option to suspend their payments on federally-held student loans for at least two months. You should reach out to your federal student loan servicer for more information on how to take advantage of this or go to <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus>.*

**Q: My current employer pays a portion of my federal student loans. Are there any new benefits associated with the passage of the CARES Act?**

*A: Yes. The CARES Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump, allows for all payments for federal student loans paid by an employer to be tax free up to \$5,250 for the 2020 tax year.*

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