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## U.S. HOUSE PASSAGE OF NCLB REWRITE

### **The End Seems Nigh at Last for the No Child Left Behind Act**

A House-Senate conference committee of the U.S. Congress agreed today on a comprehensive rewrite of the No Child Left Behind Act that is likely to reach the floor in both chambers soon after Thanksgiving. The rewrite, dubbed the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015 (S. 1177), still requires some finishing touches, but the full text should be available by November 30, according to Sen. Lamar Alexander, the Tennessee Republican who chairs the committee with jurisdiction over education policy in the U.S. Senate.

Judging by available outlines of what the new legislation contains, this bill reflects a bipartisan determination to junk federal mandates that have fueled the obsession with high-stakes standardized testing and test-driven punitive sanctions for America's public schools. As Education Week magazine put it, few will lament the looming extinction of the "almost universally despised" No Child Left Behind Act.

We will have much more to share with you about the bill to replace NCLB once the final text is published. For now here are some of the key features as described by the bill's bipartisan authors:

--The rewrite would get rid of federal mandates of "Adequate Yearly Progress" and its mandate to achieve 100-percent proficiency by 2014 as

measured by each state's chosen tests.

--Federally prescribed, escalating sanctions for struggling schools would disappear.

--The U.S. Department of Education would lose the power to dictate the models of school turnarounds that low-performing campuses could use.

--The U.S. Department of Education would be barred from continuing to prescribe teacher-evaluation policies, thus killing a controversial extension of test-driven mandates via NCLB waivers engineered by the Obama administration's secretary of education, Arne Duncan.

--Annual testing in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school would continue to be required, and results would continue to be disaggregated by racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic subgroups. But the uses made of test results generally would be up to the states.

--One area where federal pressure would still be felt: States would have to act to improve the 5 percent of schools with the lowest performance ratings and those with high dropout rates. But the interventions would be locally designed, not prescribed by the feds.

--Title I funding for the economically disadvantaged would continue to be focused on high-poverty schools.



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## CONTINUED

### **Texas AFT Welcomes U.S. House Passage of NCLB Rewrite by 359-to-64 Landslide Margin**

House passage of Every Student Succeeds Act signals open door for new public school accountability system in Texas. Every parent, student and teacher should be doing a happy dance once this law reaches final passage, but I don't think many people understand just how profound an impact this legislation could have on our schools here in Texas. This law creates a huge opportunity to rid ourselves at last of the misuse of testing and to start crafting an accountability system that supports schools that need help instead of punishing them.

Texas will now have enormous flexibility in assessing whether students and schools are performing proficiently and deciding what we do if they aren't. This law also will take away many of the federal mandates under No Child Left Behind that have driven teaching to the test, excessive test prep and unjust teacher evaluations based on students' standardized test scores.

The question now is: Will our state lawmakers and education officials grasp this opportunity to depart from the test-and-punish model of school accountability that we've suffered under for many years?

We're going to do everything in our power—and that means marshaling the voices of teachers, parents and students—to ensure that multiple reliable and valid measures are used to assess students, not just a snapshot score on a standardized test. And we're going to call again for proven models for turning around struggling schools—like the Community Schools initiatives—instead of the dismal failure of previous sanctions that sought to close neighborhood schools or turn them over to charter operators.

We've seen the Community Schools model work so well because it takes a holistic approach to tackling the challenges of helping struggling schools. The model involves a well-planned network of partnerships between

districts, nonprofits and government agencies that provide both academic assistance and social services to the students, parents and community at large. It's certain that we have a lot of work ahead of us to craft a new Texas accountability system, but we've learned a lot from the mistakes of No Child Left Behind. Let's get it right this time. The door is opening.

### **Take NCLB Rewrite Across the Finish Line— Contact Your U.S. Senators:**

Help finish off the No Child Left Behind Act and open the door to a more rational approach to assessment and accountability! Last week the U.S. House voted overwhelmingly (359 to 64) to overhaul NCLB. This week please urge the U.S. Senate to follow suit. **Write to your senators and ask them to vote YES on the Every Student Succeeds Act.**

*<http://www.texasaft.org/take-nclb-rewrite-across-finish-line-contact-u-s-senators/>*

Most people thought Congress would never pass a new federal education law, even though nearly everyone agreed we needed to fix NCLB. The polarization in Washington was too great, and people just didn't see how a bipartisan consensus could be reached.

Yet now, thanks in part to the advocacy of more than 130,000 AFT members and allies, we're on the verge of a historic victory and a fresh start that would end the test-and-punish system that has dominated education policy for more than a decade.

