

Key lawmakers close to deal on education law

Mary Troyan, USA Today 6:31 p.m. EDT March 9, 2015



Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and ranking member Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., listen to testimony during a hearing on the No Child Left Behind law on Capitol Hill on Jan. 21, 2015. (Photo: Susan Walsh, AP)

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan deal to overhaul the No Child Left Behind education law is nearly complete and will be ready for a committee vote on April 13, two key Senate lawmakers said Monday.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee, has been working with the top Democrat on the panel, Sen. Patty Murray of Washington.

"We are making significant progress in our negotiations," the pair said in a joint statement.

The current K-12 education law expired in 2007 and has grown increasingly unpopular for its focus on high-stakes standardized testing and the strong role played by the federal government.

The committee has held several hearings, and staff continue to negotiate behind the scenes on a proposal designed to win support from Republicans and Democrats in the Senate.

The bipartisan Senate process offers a stark contrast to the House effort, where a Republican bill was opposed by Democrats and drew a veto threat from the White House, in part because it would allow federal money to be shifted away from poorer school districts.

Republican leaders had scheduled a floor vote in late February but withdrew the bill from consideration when some conservatives complained it wouldn't do enough to diminish the power of the U.S. Department of Education.

Senate panel rewriting federal education law

Mary Troyan, USA Today 8:49 a.m. EST January 14, 2015



Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn. speaks on Capitol Hill on Nov. 14, 2014. Alexander chairs the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which is responsible for proposing legislation to renew the No Child Left Behind law.(Photo: Manuel Balce Ceneta, AP)

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Education would no longer be able to pressure schools to adopt certain tests or academic standards under a proposal released Tuesday night by the chairman of a key Senate committee.

Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee said his first task as chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee is to rewrite the federal law for K-12 public schools, which expired in 2007.

He introduced a draft proposal Tuesday to kick off meetings with Democrats and Republicans and a series of public hearings in the coming weeks.

Alexander's ideas take direct aim at the authority of the Education Department, the agency he led under former president George H.W. Bush.

"The department has, in effect, become a national school board," Alexander said.

Under his proposal, federal education officials would not be allowed to push local and state school officials into adopting certain policies in exchange for waivers from the federal No Child Left Behind law, or to qualify for extra financial incentives.

Throughout President Obama's tenure, Education Secretary Arne Duncan has helped shape student testing, teacher evaluations and academic standards by requiring specific reforms in exchange for flexibility or competitive grants.

"The secretary really has had states over a barrel and they've had to do what he told them to do ... in order to keep their schools from being labeled failing schools," Alexander said.

Alexander's proposal would rewrite No Child Left Behind, signed into law by Bush in 2002. The law is intensely unpopular among parents and educators who say it focuses too rigidly on test scores and contains unreachable achievement targets.

Testing is likely to be controversial within Alexander's committee and the White House. Duncan said Monday a regular testing regime provides important information to parents, teachers and taxpayers about their schools' quality.

Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, the top Democrat on the Senate education committee, agrees the No Child Left Behind law needs to be fixed and testing policies should be reviewed.

"We need to work to reduce redundant and unnecessary testing," Murray said.

Alexander was somewhat neutral on what the new law should mandate on tests.

"Are there too many? Are they redundant? Are they the right tests? I'm open on the question," he said.

He said he wants to retain a requirement that testing data be broken out by subgroups such as race, ethnicity, social-economic level and English-speaking skills.

Murray, echoing administration concerns, said the bill should include expanded access to pre-K and a continued focus on equity by improving school systems with high numbers of minority or lower-income students.

"We need to make sure we're meeting all of our obligations to all of our students," Murray said.

Alexander said his proposal would allow states to decide for themselves whether to adopt the voluntary Common Core academic standards initiated by governors.

"If Tennessee wants Common Core, it should have it. If not, it shouldn't have it," he said.

Study: Education waivers could leave behind at-risk students

AP 6:02 p.m. EDT August 27, 2013



Secretary of Education Arne Duncan speaks on CBS's "Face the Nation" in Washington. (Photo: Chris Usher, AP)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Millions of at-risk students could fall through the cracks as the Education Department gives states permission to ignore parts of No Child Left Behind, according to a study education advocates released Tuesday.

The Education Department has been giving some states waivers from the education law's requirements, including those to collect and publish data about students and then use the results to pinpoint problem schools. The resulting patchwork of rules — from Miami to Seattle — has given states more freedom to carry out plans to boost education but has allowed almost 2,300 schools to shed their label of seriously troubled, according to numbers compiled at the Campaign for High School Equity.

"It appears to us that waivers could lead to fewer students of color receiving the support they need," said Rufina Hernandez, executive director for the Campaign for High School Equity.

Her coalition of education reformers, civil rights activists and policy analysts studied the 34 states and the District of Columbia that had received waivers from No Child Left Behind before April.

Since then, another six states and a collection of individual districts in California have won waivers. Illinois, Iowa, Texas and Wyoming are still waiting for Education Secretary Arnie Duncan's verdict for their applications.

The results show students who are at the highest risk of dropping out — those from poor families, students whose native language is not English, those with learning disabilities and minority students — are often no longer tracked as carefully as they were before Duncan began

exempting states from some requirements if they promised to better prepare their students for college or careers.

An Education Department spokesman declined to comment on the report.

For his part, Duncan has said the existing law does not allow school leaders to use common sense to determine what schools are failing and which are statistical anomalies. That lack of flexibility, Duncan has told lawmakers, has forced states to target too many schools.

Duncan has been vocal in calling for a replacement to No Child Left Behind that would render his waivers moot.

Under the original No Child Left Behind, schools that failed to teach at-risk students would be flagged if one group wasn't keeping pace. If one of the subgroups failed to meet its performance targets for two consecutive years, officials were required to stage an intervention to turn the entire school around.

But the advocates' review finds those in-depth reporting requirements have fallen by the wayside under the waivers. An intervention is no longer automatically triggered in as many as 19 states, meaning those efforts that once were at the center of the law are now optional. In 16 states, student groups are lumped together and treated as one bloc of at-risk pupils, essentially scrapping the reporting of at-risk groups by label.

The waivers make it easier to mask stumbles.

"The No Child Left Behind system itself was far from perfect," said Phillip Lovell, vice president for federal advocacy with the Alliance for Excellent Education. "Where it succeeded was shining the spotlight on the subgroups."

That spotlight now has dimmed, he said.

Take, for instance, Ohio. In that state, 856 schools failed to meet their performance benchmarks for at-risk students two years in a row. Under the waiver Duncan approved, the number of schools called troubled schools fell to 445. Of that smaller sum, only 162 schools were deemed an urgent priority.

That's not necessarily a bad thing, said Mike Petrilli, who has studied No Child Left Behind as a leader of the reform-minded Fordham Institute.

"The waivers allow states to prioritize. We should be saving the toughest interventions for schools that have low proficiency and low progress," said Petrilli, a former official at the Education Department. "The spirit of the law is to make sure that kids don't get left behind."

In all, 2,292 schools nationwide were deemed no longer needing special attention for improvement in states operating under waivers. In 13 states, the number of schools identified for intervention has dropped by more than 100 schools.

Duncan's department can adjust this, though, when states return to the Education Department seeking to continue running their schools outside of No Child Left Behind's rules. Duncan's hall passes only last one year and states face the threat of returning to No Child Left Behind's requirements if they don't execute their improvements plans.

The Education Department has already warned Kansas, Oregon and Washington state that their exemptions are at risk for the 2014-15 academic year if the schools there don't deliver on their applications' promises.

"They can get stricter to make sure the accountability happens in states and trigger the interventions that were in place under No Child Left Behind," said Hernandez, whose coalition includes the NAACP, the National Urban League and the National Council of La Raza.

In 2011, the Education Department announced that states could petition Duncan for waivers from No Child Left Behind's ambitious requirements, such as having all students read and count at grade level by 2014 or else risk their federal funding.

Duncan had hoped the specter of waivers would compel Congress to update No Child Left Behind, which expired in 2007 without renewal.

"The same year that No Child Left Behind came out, the iPod came out," Petrilli said. "We're still on No Child Left Behind, version 1.0, and we've had new versions of the iPod, iPhone, iPad."

Various rewrites of the law have been discussed but none has made its way to the White House for a president's signature. The Republican-led House has passed a version; a rewrite has been completed in the Senate education panel but no vote of the full body has been scheduled.

"NCLB is six years overdue for an update, and nearly all agree that it should be replaced with a law that gives systems and educators greater freedom while continuing to fulfill the law's original promise," Duncan wrote in Sunday's Washington Post.

"In the months ahead, I will ask Congress to listen to those doing the real work of education change," he added.

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School Improvement Grant MAP

Alaska

State Application

- [FY2009 \(/programs/sif/summary/akapp.pdf\)](/programs/sif/summary/akapp.pdf)
- [FY2010 \(/programs/sif/summary2010/akapp10.pdf\)](/programs/sif/summary2010/akapp10.pdf)
- [FY2011 \(/programs/sif/apps2011/akapp11.pdf\)](/programs/sif/apps2011/akapp11.pdf)
- [FY2012 \(/programs/sif/apps2012/akapp12.pdf\)](/programs/sif/apps2012/akapp12.pdf)
- [FY2013 \(/programs/sif/apps2013/akapp13.pdf\)](/programs/sif/apps2013/akapp13.pdf)

State Allocation

- FY2009: \$1,655,369
 - ARRA: \$9,071,222
- FY2010: \$1,636,914
- FY2011: \$1,561,442

State Waivers

- [Teacher and Principal Evaluation Timeline Waiver \(/programs/sif/summary2010/akinvisitedltr.pdf\)](/programs/sif/summary2010/akinvisitedltr.pdf)
- [FY 2009 Conditional Waiver of 25% Carryover Requirement \(/programs/sif/summary/akcolrt.pdf\)](/programs/sif/summary/akcolrt.pdf)

State School Improvement Grant Website (<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/stim/home2.html>)

[Back to State Map | Home \(/programs/sif/index.html\)](/programs/sif/index.html)



[\(/print/programs/sif/map/ak.html\)](/print/programs/sif/map/ak.html) [Printable view \(/print/programs/sif/map/ak.html\)](/print/programs/sif/map/ak.html)



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How Do I Find...

- [Student loans, forgiveness \(/fund/grants-college.html?src=rn\)](/fund/grants-college.html?src=rn)
- [College accreditation \(http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/\)](http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/)
- [No Child Left Behind \(/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=rn\)](/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=rn)

What happens IF.... And There

IF we were to decide to no longer abide by the terms of the waiver, the feds would null and void the waiver.

IF the waiver is determined to be null and void then NCLB kicks back in. No money loss at first

IF we decide to not abide by NCLB the feds may or may not cut funding. No state has ever done this.

IF the Feds decide to cut funding it falls primarily under *Title 1,2,3,4, and 10.

IF we cut assessments that falls under Title 6 which is additional funding in the formula.

IF we stop reporting on our progress there could be additional cuts as well.

There are also other programs that could be affected.

IDEA -language is different from standard Education money.

There is also a possibility of violation under the Civil Rights Act.

There is no precedent for this so the reality is we do not know what will happen.

*IF there are cuts initially \$69,015 million could go away.

IDEA- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act