

# BACKGROUND

No. 2858 | NOVEMBER 14, 2013

## How the A-PLUS Act Can Rein In the Government's Education Power Grab

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### Abstract

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is a continuation of nearly five decades of growing federal intervention in education. Signed into law in 2001 and intended to improve students' academic performance, NCLB has chiefly resulted in burdening schools and states with costly and time-intensive bureaucratic compliance, while mandating unattainable universal proficiency requirements. NCLB suffers from bipartisan displeasure, and the Obama Administration has granted waivers to over 40 states, releasing them from the law's most onerous provisions—on the condition that these states implement the Administration's vision of education policy. This pact is a ruse: Any short-term relief that states gain comes at the price of ceding unprecedented authority over education decisions to the U.S. Department of Education. Instead of continuing to pay for dozens of ineffective and duplicative federal programs, states should be allowed to opt out of NCLB.*

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, has been slated for its own reauthorization since 2007. Since that time, Congress has considered various proposals to rewrite the 600-page education law, without reaching a consensus, leaving NCLB to continue to operate as it has since 2002. While policymakers agree No Child Left Behind is broken, there is less agreement about how to move forward.

During this time of deliberation over the future of NCLB, the Obama Administration began offering conditions-based waivers to states, "freeing" them from the law's most onerous provisions. The Administration has seized on bipartisan displeasure with NCLB

### KEY POINTS

- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is a continuation of nearly five decades of growing federal intervention in education.
- NCLB has created a tremendous bureaucratic compliance burden for states and has rendered some states less transparent about student outcomes.
- Neither a wholesale reauthorization of the massive NCLB nor strings-attached waivers from its regulations is the way to reduce federal intervention and restore excellence in education. Schools need genuine flexibility from Washington mandates.
- The A-PLUS Act would allow states to completely opt out of the programs that fall under NCLB, and direct dollars to their state's most pressing education needs.
- Such an approach would help downsize federal intervention in education, place decisions about education spending and programs in the hands of state and local leaders, reduce the bureaucratic compliance burden, and begin to restore federalism in education.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/bg2858>

Produced by the Domestic Policy Studies Department

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and provided waivers to over 40 states, along with eight school districts in California, that agreed to implement the Administration's vision of education policy. The relief offered through this waiver pact between states and Washington is a ruse; any short-term relief that states gain comes at the price of ceding unprecedented authority over education decisions to the U.S. Department of Education.

Neither a wholesale reauthorization of the massive NCLB nor strings-attached waivers from its regulations is the way to reduce federal intervention and restore excellence in education. Members of Congress, superintendents, parents, and taxpayers recognize that schools need genuine flexibility from Washington mandates.

The Academic Partnerships Lead Us to Success (A-PLUS) Act would allow states to completely opt out of the programs that fall under No Child Left Behind and direct dollars to their state's most pressing education needs. Such an approach would help downsize federal intervention in education, place decisions about education spending and programs in the hands of state and local leaders, reduce the bureaucratic compliance burden, and begin to restore federalism in education.

**A Half-Century of Growing Federal Intervention.** No Child Left Behind is a continuation of nearly five decades of growing federal intervention in education. NCLB is the seventh reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson. The ESEA was the education component of Johnson's "Great Society" initiative, and began the practice of compensatory education. In the wake of ESEA's enactment, the federal government began compensating low-income school districts, primarily through Title I of the law, in an effort to narrow achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers.

The original ESEA included five titles, 32 pages, and roughly \$1 billion in federal funding. Programs and spending under the ESEA grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s, marking a shift from the compensatory model toward attempts at systemic education

reform from Washington. That shift became particularly acute in the 1990s when the focus became standards-based reform. President Bill Clinton signed his ESEA reauthorization—the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994—into law, after having ushered in companion legislation known as Goals 2000.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to 1994, education funding targeted categorical programs with specific purposes. The coordination of the Improving America's Schools Act and Goals 2000 funded "school restructuring that influence[d] the entire school curriculum and culture. Goals 2000 [was] essentially a portrait of the Clinton administration's model public school, complete with social services."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the IASA for the first time required states to establish "performance-based accountability systems," marking a shift toward outcomes-based reform and further federal intervention.<sup>3</sup>

In 1999, in the face of growing federal interference in local school policy, conservatives in Congress introduced an alternative: the Academic Achievement for All Act (Straight A's). Straight A's proposed allowing states to consolidate funding under ESEA programs in order to drastically reduce the bureaucratic red tape that had accumulated under the ESEA, and became the foundation of the Academic Partnerships Lead Us to Success (A-PLUS) Act.

American students, principals, teachers, and taxpayers never had the opportunity to benefit from the flexibility that Straight A's offered, which only progressed through the House. Two years later, as the seventh reauthorization of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

### **From ESEA to No Child Left Behind: Shifting Policy Goals**

No Child Left Behind included major policy changes, signaling a departure from the policies codified in previous reauthorizations of ESEA. Among the major changes were "Adequate Yearly Progress" requirements for all students to be proficient in math

1. H.R. 6, Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, U.S. Department of Education, Archived Information, <http://www2.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA/index.html> (accessed October 24, 2013).

2. Jennifer A. Marshall, "National Standards and Tests: An Un-American Proposal," in *Bill Clinton, Superintendent: Micro-Managing Local Schools from Washington* (Washington, DC: Family Research Council, 1997).

3. Frederick M. Hess and Michael J. Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006).

and reading, the “highly qualified teacher” provision mandating additional certification requirements, and a host of new programs and spending.

**Adequate Yearly Progress.** The cornerstone of No Child Left Behind is a provision known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). For the first time over the course of the various reauthorizations, the law required states to test children annually in grades three through eight, and once again in high school in math and reading. NCLB also required states to make information about student performance on those assessments public via school report cards, and further required states to disaggregate student performance data according to population subgroups: students from low-income families, minority students, and English-language learners. NCLB stipulates that by 2014, all children are to be proficient in math and reading.

No Child Left Behind included sanctions for states that failed to achieve universal student proficiency by 2014. Among other things, states faced a requirement to allow students to transfer out of underperforming public schools, and had to provide tutoring for children in schools that failed to make AYP. One of the unintended consequences of NCLB emerged when states began reworking their K–12 systems—not in order to infuse more rigor or transparency—but to avoid the new federal sanctions imposed by the law.

While NCLB mandated universal proficiency, the law permitted states to define what it meant for a student to be proficient, and for states to set their own cut scores on state tests. Some states reconfigured the way they scored state assessments to increase the number of students who passed state tests, while becoming less transparent about students’ academic performance.<sup>4</sup>

In what many researchers have deemed a “race to the bottom,” No Child Left Behind’s AYP sanction

was perhaps its greatest overreach—and most significant policy flaw.<sup>5</sup>

**Highly Qualified Teacher.** Another major policy shift under NCLB came in the form of new federal mandates on teacher qualifications. NCLB mandated that states require all teachers of core academic subjects—math, English, social studies, reading, science, foreign language, art, economics, and geography—to hold a bachelor’s degree, demonstrate subject-matter competence, and to be state-certified (generally completing a teacher preparation program or graduating from a college of education).<sup>6</sup> This combination of credentials and state certification is how No Child Left Behind defines a “highly qualified teacher.”

Yet, as researchers Frederick M. Hess and Michael J. Petrilli note, “while everyone agrees that teacher quality is the most important school-based factor in affecting student achievement, there is sharp disagreement about what makes for a highly qualified teacher and how we can hire more of them.”<sup>7</sup> Hess and Petrilli point out that the debate is framed by the fact that, in the words of researcher Dan Goldhaber, there “does not appear to be a strong link between many readily quantifiable teacher attributes...and teacher quality.”<sup>8</sup> “In other words,” they conclude that “though there is widespread agreement that good teachers matter, there is less agreement about the training, credentials, or qualities that make a good teacher.”<sup>9</sup>

In fact, there is evidence that teacher certification has little, if any, impact on student achievement. The Brookings Institution found that

certification of teachers bears little relationship to teacher effectiveness (measured by impacts on student achievement)... To put it simply, teachers vary considerably in the extent to which they promote student learning, but whether a teacher

4. Eugene Hickock and Matthew Ladner, “Reauthorization of No Child Left Behind: Federal Management of Citizen Ownership of K-12 Education,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2047, June 27, 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/06/reauthorization-of-no-child-left-behind-federal-management-or-citizen-ownership-of-k-12-education>.

5. Ibid.

6. Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind*.

7. Ibid.

8. Dan Goldhaber, “Why Do We License Teachers?” in Frederick M. Hess, Andrew J. Rotherham, and Kate Walsh, eds., *A Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom: Appraising Old Answers and New Ideas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 91.

9. Ibid.

is certified or not is largely irrelevant to predicting his or her effectiveness.<sup>10</sup>

Whether a teacher was certified, alternatively certified, or uncertified had no impact on her students' math performance.<sup>11</sup> The NCLB authors merely assumed that paper credentials were the way to improve the teaching workforce. The evidence suggests the opposite: that removing the barriers to entry into the classroom holds far more promise for attracting promising teachers into the nation's schools.

**New Spending and Programs.** In addition to the new mandates imposed on states and local school districts, NCLB continued a trend by national policymakers to have a "program for every problem," resulting in growth in federal intervention.<sup>12</sup>

In fiscal year (FY) 2012, the federal government spent nearly \$25 billion on the dozens of programs that are authorized under No Child Left Behind.<sup>13</sup> This wide range of programs that falls under NCLB strains school-level management. States and school districts must spend time completing applications for competitive grant programs, monitoring federal program notices, and complying with federal reporting requirements.<sup>14</sup> According to Representative John Kline (R-MN), Chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, "States and school districts work 7.8 million hours each year collecting and disseminating information required under Title I of federal education law. Those hours cost more than \$235 million. The burden is tremendous, and this is just one of many federal laws weighing down our schools."<sup>15</sup>

The number of employees working in state education agencies provides some additional evidence of the bureaucratic compliance burden imposed by NCLB and decades of growth in federal education programs and spending. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that more than 16 million people are employed by state and local governments, the majority of whom (8.9 million) work in education.<sup>16</sup> While the bulk of the nearly 9 million education workers are teachers and school staff, a percentage are employed by state education agencies for largely administrative purposes. Across the country, 540 people on average are employed in each state education agency.

### **NCLB: More Bad than Good**

No Child Left Behind's requirement for school districts to disaggregate student achievement data was intended to ensure that underrepresented groups were not hidden among school averages. Although NCLB's architects attempted to increase transparency about student outcomes, the law's perverse incentives ultimately caused states to water down assessments and become less transparent about student results. The well-intentioned but misguided universal-proficiency mandate incentivized states to rework their state assessments to increase the number of students who passed state tests—not to infuse more rigor or transparency. While the law's highly qualified teacher mandate led to more teachers obtaining paper credentials, it is unclear whether NCLB resulted in more effective teachers making their way into the nation's classrooms.

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10. Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger, "Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job," Brookings Institution, The Hamilton Project, *White Paper* No. 2006-01, April 2006, <http://www.oest.oas.org/iten/documentos/Investigacion/Teacher%20effectiveness%202006.pdf> (accessed October 24, 2013).

11. *Ibid.*

12. Dan Lips, "Reforming No Child Left Behind by Allowing States to Opt Out: An A-PLUS for Federalism," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2044, June 19, 2007, [http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/06/reforming-no-child-left-behind-by-allowing-states-to-opt-out-an-a-plus-for-federalism#\\_ftn6](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/06/reforming-no-child-left-behind-by-allowing-states-to-opt-out-an-a-plus-for-federalism#_ftn6).

13. U.S. Department of Education, "Education Department Budget History Table: FY 1980-FY 2012 President's Budget," Budget History Tables, August 5, 2011, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/history/edhistory.pdf> (accessed October 24, 2013).

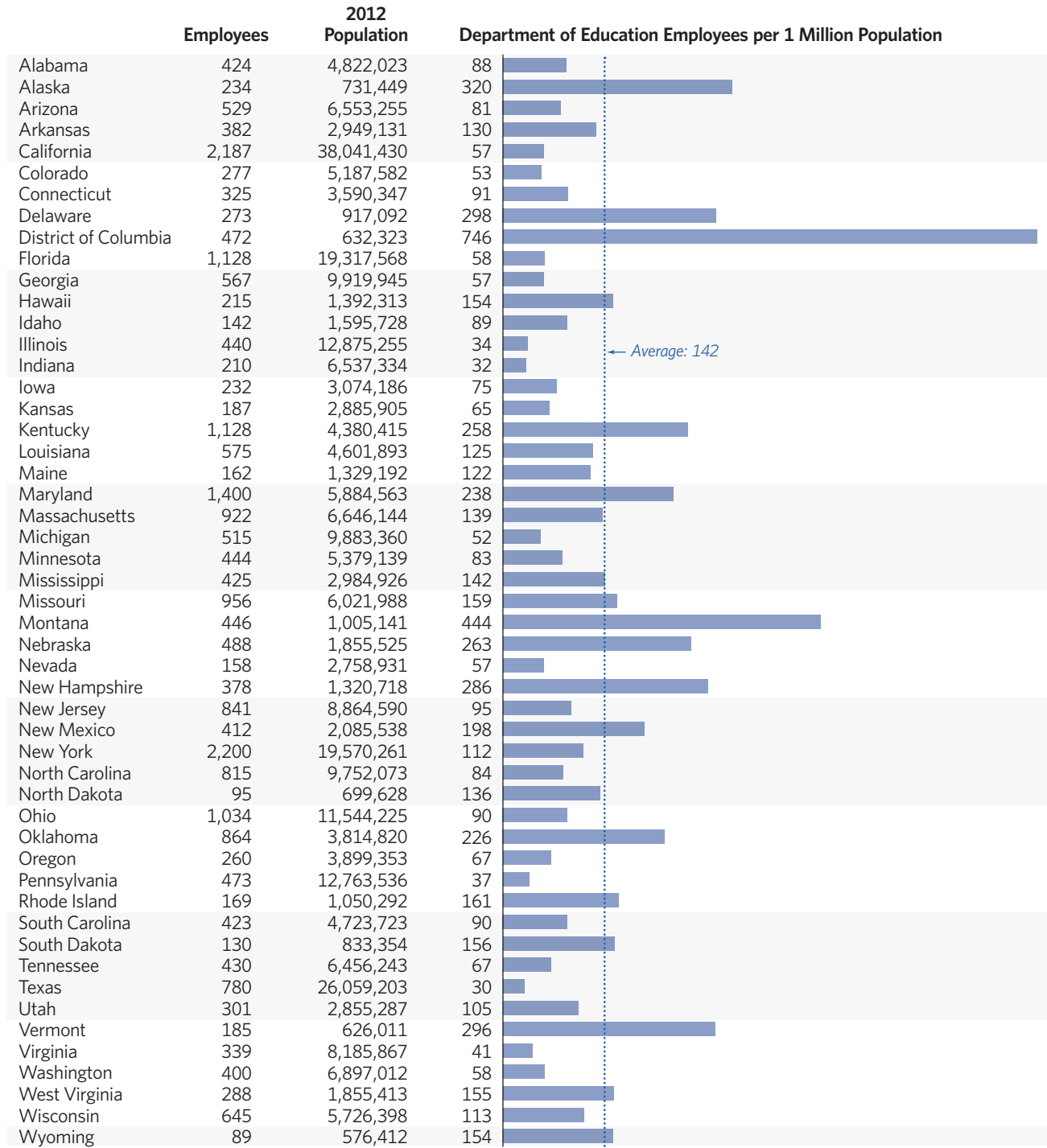
14. Jennifer A. Marshall, "Freeing Schools from Washington's Education Overreach," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3214, April 6, 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/04/Freeing-Schools-from-Washingtons-Education-Overreach>.

15. News release, "Kline Statement: Hearing on 'Education Regulations: Weighing the Burden on Schools and Students,'" Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives, March 1, 2011, <http://edworkforce.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=226697> (accessed October 24, 2013).

16. News release, "State and Local Governments Employ 16.4 Million Full-Time Equivalent Employees in 2011, Census Bureau Reports," U.S. Census Bureau, August 23, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/governments/cb12-156.html> (accessed October 24, 2013).

CHART 1

## States' Departments of Education Employees



**Notes:** Figures for California include staff at three state schools: California School for the Deaf, Fremont; California School for the Deaf, Riverside; and the California School for the Blind, Fremont. Figures for Missouri do not include employees at state-operated schools.  
**Source:** Heritage Foundation research based on state website data and correspondence with state government representatives. Figures for Connecticut, Florida, and Hawaii from Center for American Progress, "State Education Agencies as Agents of Change," July 2011, <http://www.activate-ed.org/sites/default/files/resources/StateEducationAgenciesasAgentsofChange.pdf> (accessed October 29, 2013). Population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/totals/2012/index.html> (accessed October 29, 2013).

In a prescient critique of NCLB, former U.S. Department of Education staff member Lawrence Uzzell criticized the law for

virtually guarantee[ing] massive evasion of its own intent, ordering state education agencies to do things that they mostly don't want to do. Washington will be forced either to allow states great leeway in how they implement NCLB or to make NCLB more detailed, prescriptive, and top-heavy. If Washington chooses the former, the statute might as well not exist; if the latter, federal policymakers will increasingly resemble Soviet central planners trying to improve economic performance by micromanaging decisions from Moscow.<sup>17</sup>

In offering strings-attached waivers from the onerous provisions of NCLB to states willing to implement the Administration's preferred education policies, President Obama has chosen the latter under the guise of the former. States are being offered "flexibility" within the law, but only on the condition that they cede unprecedented control over their standards and assessments to Washington, and agree to other Administration priorities, such as school turnaround efforts and common standards and tests (all which should be state-level policies).

When President Johnson signed the original ESEA into law, he sought to "bridge the gap between helplessness and hope."<sup>18</sup> President George W. Bush's 2001 reauthorization included policies intended to eliminate what he called the "soft bigotry of low expectations."<sup>19</sup> Yet 48 years after the ESEA's first enactment, and more than a decade after No Child Left Behind was signed into law, significant achievement gaps remain.

While the Bush Administration's original vision for No Child Left Behind included a reduction in

bureaucracy along with state flexibility, "those valuable reform ideas were either watered down or eliminated during the legislative process on Capitol Hill in 2001."<sup>20</sup> The bill that ultimately became law significantly expanded federal intervention into education at the expense of state and local control.

### **Crafting an Alternative to No Child Left Behind**

For nearly half a century, federal intervention in education has grown without commensurate gains in academic achievement, or an elimination of the achievement gap. Instead of continuing to filter billions of dollars through dozens of programs authorized by No Child Left Behind, and instead of perpetuating the bureaucratic compliance burden associated with those programs, Congress should allow states to opt out of NCLB, and direct dollars and decision making to their most pressing education needs.

State and local leaders are in a better position than federal lawmakers to understand the needs of students in their communities, and are better positioned to direct education spending in an effective way. University of Arkansas professor Patrick Wolf writes about this principle of subsidiarity, the concept that

people in localized areas like states, communities, schools, and families have contextual knowledge that helps inform their decisions—knowledge that centralized administrators in far-away places (like, say, Washington, DC) lack.... [S]mall communities more directly reap the benefits when things go well for their members and suffer the consequences when things go poorly, meaning community decision-makers have strong incentives to get things right.<sup>21</sup>

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17. Lawrence A. Uzzell, "No Child Left Behind: The Dangers of Centralized Education Policy," Cato Institute *Policy Analysis* No. 544, May 31, 2005, p. 1, <http://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/no-child-left-behind-dangers-centralized-education-policy> (accessed October 24, 2013).
  18. President Lyndon B. Johnson, remarks in Johnson City, Texas, upon signing the Elementary and Secondary Education Bill, April 11, 1965, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965*, Vol. 1, entry 181 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 412-414, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650411.asp> (accessed October 24, 2013).
  19. "Education: Excerpts from Bush's Speech on Improving Education," *The New York Times*, September 3, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/03/us/excerpts-from-bush-s-speech-on-improving-education.html> (accessed October 24, 2013).
  20. Lips, "Reforming No Child Left Behind and Allowing States to Opt Out."
  21. Patrick J. Wolf, "Tough to Swallow," Jay P. Greene's blog, July 16, 2013, <http://jaypgreene.com/2013/07/16/tough-to-swallow/> (accessed October 24, 2013).

Not only would opting out of NCLB enable local policymakers to better direct funding, it would bring federal intervention into education more in line with Washington’s 10 percent share in its financing.

**The A-PLUS Approach.** The A-PLUS Act has been introduced in various iterations by conservatives in Congress over the past decade. Most recently, the proposal—which would allow states to opt out of the programs that fall under No Child Left Behind and direct dollars to state and local education priorities—was introduced by Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT) and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX). A-PLUS would maintain a focus on state-level student achievement data and transparency, and would restore state and local control over education. The purpose of A-PLUS is:

1. “To give States and local communities maximum flexibility to determine how to improve academic achievement and implement education reforms.”
2. “To reduce the administrative costs and compliance burden of Federal education programs in order to focus Federal resources on improving academic achievement.”
3. “To ensure that States and communities are accountable to the public for advancing the academic achievement of all students, especially disadvantaged children.”<sup>22</sup>

In both the House and Senate versions, A-PLUS would allow states to issue a “declaration of intent” to the U.S. Department of Education, signaling a state’s desire to exit NCLB. In order to send such a declaration to the Department of Education, a state must either obtain the approval of its “state authorizing officials,” or pass a voter referendum. A-PLUS defines state authorizing officials as a state’s governor, highest elected education official (such as a state superintendent or commissioner), and members of the state legislature. If two of three state authorizing officials agree to the terms of the declaration of intent, the request to opt out of the programs under NCLB is sent to the U.S. Department of Education,

where the Secretary of Education then has 60 days to approve it. The Secretary must approve the declaration of intent as long as it:

- Lists programs under NCLB that a state wishes to combine,
- Includes an assurance that the declaration has been approved by the state authorizing officials,
- States that the declaration is good for five years,
- Provides assurance that the state will use fiscal control,
- Adheres to all civil rights laws,
- Advances educational opportunities for disadvantaged children, and
- Includes a plan for accountability to parents and taxpayers.

The U.S. Secretary of Education would then be required to recognize a state’s request to opt out of NCLB unless the declaration fails to include any of the assurances stated above. A-PLUS would send funding under NCLB back to a state, allowing the state to then direct funding to any education purpose under *state law*. A-PLUS enables a state “to assume full management responsibility for the expenditure of Federal funds for certain eligible programs for the purpose of advancing, on a more comprehensive and effective basis, the educational policy of such State.”<sup>23</sup>

Like No Child Left Behind, A-PLUS requires annual reports about student outcomes, disaggregated by subgroup, disseminated by states to parents on a regular basis. States must also agree to abide by all federal civil rights laws and demonstrate how they are improving academic achievement, increasing education outcomes for disadvantaged students, and narrowing achievement gaps.

Representative Bishop, who introduced the proposal in the House, stated:

22. H.R. 2456, The Academic Partnerships Lead Us to Success Act, 113th Congress (2013–2014), <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c113:H.R.2456>: (accessed October 24, 2013).

23. *Ibid.*

As a former teacher I can attest to the fact that No Child Left Behind is the wrong approach to improving education standards in this country. It's overly prescriptive and limits teachers' ability to address the unique needs of their students. This nation is simply too...diverse for one set of ideas to rule from coast to coast. California is not Kansas. Alabama is not Alaska, and Massachusetts is not Utah. Yet, through the eyes of No Child Left Behind, each state is the same and the educational needs of the students are addressed the same way."<sup>24</sup>

Senator Cornyn, who introduced A-PLUS in the Senate, declared, "Ensuring that students have access to the best possible educational opportunities that meet their needs should be the cornerstone of education policy."<sup>25</sup>

### **The A-PLUS Approach: A Better Way**

By allowing states to opt out of the many programs that fall under No Child Left Behind in order to consolidate funding and direct spending to their state's most pressing education needs, the A-PLUS approach would:

- **Restore educational decision making to state and local leaders, who are better positioned to make informed decisions about the needs of their school communities.** Instead of concentrating decisions about how to best manage programs for low-income children in Washington, and in lieu of filtering funding through dozens of competitive grant programs ranging from Ready To Learn Television and federal reading programs to Investing in Innovation (i3) grants and programs for Alaskan natives, A-PLUS would empower states to reclaim responsibility for how taxpayer dollars are spent, moving the decision-making process close to local school leaders and parents. It would also place the responsibility for educational improvement with states and schools, which have the strongest incentive to get policymaking right.

- **Allow states to consolidate funding for programs that they consider ineffective or wasteful.** A-PLUS would empower state and local leaders to identify federal education programs that are ineffective, and allow them to consolidate program funds and use them to address local education priorities.
- **Reduce bureaucracy and increase transparency of student outcomes.** By allowing states to consolidate funding for the numerous education programs that are authorized under No Child Left Behind, A-PLUS would dramatically reduce the bureaucratic compliance burden associated with applying for, monitoring, and reporting on dozens of formula and competitive grant programs. Allowing states to opt out of NCLB would significantly reduce the administrative burden borne by state education agencies and local school districts, freeing them from much of the paperwork currently draining school resources. At the same time, A-PLUS would redirect reporting on student outcomes from Washington back to parents and taxpayers.
- **Reduce federal intervention in education to be more consistent with Washington's 10 percent share in its financing and with the tenets of federalism.** States and localities finance roughly 90 percent of all education spending. By allowing states to opt out of NCLB, governors, state legislatures, and local policymakers would be in a better position to direct education programs and spending, bringing federal intervention into education more in line with Washington's 10 percent share in its financing. Moreover, such flexibility could help foster the robust education reform movement underway in the states, which would have more opportunity to direct education spending toward the policies and innovations that they believe best reflect state priorities.

24. News release, "Rep. Bishop Proposes Alternative to No Child Left Behind," Office of Representative Rob Bishop, June 20, 2013, <http://robbishop.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=339936> (accessed October 24, 2013).

25. News release, "New Cornyn Education Bill Aims to Bring Schools to 'A-PLUS' Standards," Office of Senator John Cornyn, June 20, 2013, [http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=NewsReleases&ContentRecord\\_id=94b30144-f6aa-415d-af2c-f7761bbec80a](http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=NewsReleases&ContentRecord_id=94b30144-f6aa-415d-af2c-f7761bbec80a) (accessed October 24, 2013).



## **Conclusion**

Affording states the opportunity to opt out of No Child Left Behind could reverse decades of growing, inefficient federal intervention in education. Such flexibility would give states the opportunity to prioritize how the taxpayer dollars that are funneled through federal education programs are spent, allowing them to target spending to their communities' most pressing education needs. It would reduce the bureaucratic compliance burden, begin to reduce federal intervention, and move toward restoring federalism in education.

State and local leaders, informed by the needs of parents, students, and taxpayers, will be better stewards of the nearly \$25 billion spent annually on the programs that fall under No Child Left Behind. Instead of continuing to spend that money on dozens of ineffective and duplicative federal programs, states should be given the option to decline participation in NCLB, and focus that spending on the education initiatives that work for their communities. It is, after all, their taxpayers' money.

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