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IDEAS THAT EMPOWER PEOPLE

GOP Presidential Candidates Call for Common Core Repeal

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While campaigning for the Republican New Hampshire presidential primary in January, businessman and reality-television star Donald Trump joined other Republican presidential candidates in calling for an end to Common Core State Standards.

Trump also called for a “tremendous” reduction in the size and authority of the U.S. Department of Education.

Prior to Trump’s rejection of Common Core, fellow candidates Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) called for a repeal of the national curriculum standards.

Brittany Corona, a state programs and government relations director at the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, says the origins of Common Core are more complex than some people may realize.

“The Common Core State Standards Initiative was developed in 2009 by the privately run National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers,” Corona said. “Shortly afterward, the federal government offered \$4.35 billion in competitive grants and No Child Left Behind waivers to states that agreed to adopt common standards.”

Top-Down Policies

Corona says the rapid rise of Common Core was followed by a slow-but-steady decline in support.

“By 2010, 46 states adopted the national standards, but by 2015, over 15 of the original 46 [states] made efforts to remove themselves from the standards and aligned tests,” Corona said.

Corona says implementing education reforms that will benefit children cannot be accomplished while Common Core standardization is being mandated.

“Many Common Core supporters say school choice and Common Core can coexist,” Corona said. “However, it is more likely that Common Core perpetuates the current government-run

education system. Furthermore, any positive change that may come from Common Core will take time, which many families don't have, to incite revisiting and changing established, top-down government policies."

Feedback Loops Needed

Corona says the key to a better educational system is empowering parents by providing a variety of educational options.

"Establishing an educational system that will improve itself continually and responsively for the betterment of all children must come from school choice, not more centralization," Corona said.

'A Good Idea'

Neal McCluskey, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, says presidential candidates' focus on shrinking Washington, DC's influence over individual classrooms is encouraging.

"Slashing the budget of [the U.S. Department of] Education is a good idea, because schools are not hard-up for money," McCluskey said. "In fact, for the past 40 years, they've been the recipients of huge spending increases per student."

Emphasis on Breaking Monopoly on Education

McCluskey says breaking the monopoly on education currently enjoyed by the government is the key to real reform.

"Doing away with Common Core would be a nice start, but moving to expand school choice is the real route ... to school reform, because once we stop funding the provisioning of education [in government-operated schools alone], there will be real accountability, and schools will have to compete for students," McCluskey said. "But this will be tough, because teachers unions and associations are very well-organized and powerful."