



Reps. DesJarlais, Blackburn lone holdouts in vote against No Child Left Behind

Divyansh Mangeskar

December 04, 2015

The House voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday to scale back the federal role in American education. The Senate is expected to take up the measure next week, and President Barack Obama has indicated that he will sign it into law.

A massive rewrite of federal education law moving through Congress will give states until the end of the 2017-2018 school year to decide which K-12 standardized tests are no longer necessary. However the bill would retain the testing requirement within the 2002 No Child Left Behind law in that many parents, teachers & school districts abhor.

The waivers were given to states that agreed to adopt certain education measures - in CT the waiver involved linking teacher evaluations to student test scores.

U.S. Rep. Stephen Fincher, a Crockett County Republican, said the bill would return important classroom decisions to the states.

"Central New York parents, educators and administrators know best when it comes to educating our children and improving education in our schools", he said. Those dollars would remain at struggling schools, under the bill. Those waivers would be void by August under the bill.

Cole said, "While well-intentioned at the time of its passage, No Child Left Behind has clearly led to a decline in learning and academic readiness". What would now be considered an "underperforming" school would be one which sits in the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in the state.

One thing absent from the bill is portability —allowing money to follow low-income students to public schools of their choice, an idea embraced by Republicans.

Allows flexibility in the utilization of most federal education funds so that school districts can put the needs of their students first. Gone would be its punitive accountability system, which sacked states if not enough students were proficient in reading and math - a pillar of the old law that is largely blamed for creating a culture of over-testing. "Finally, it is nearly impossible to believe even a small fraction of the representatives who voted had read the entire 1000-plus page

bill in the basically two days allotted to do so, so they may have missed all sorts of potential loopholes and unintended consequences", Neal McCluskey, director of Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, told Caffeinated Thoughts.

"There are few areas with a bigger return on spending than an investment in a child's education at an early age", DeLauro said.

"It's like the Obamacare process all over again - secret meetings, backroom deals, and nobody was given time to read the whole bill".

But not everyone is happy with the bill. Instead, states would be responsible for working with schools and local districts to develop achievement goals and accountability plans.

The bill specifically prevents the federal government from requiring that states evaluate teachers at all, much less use test scores to rate them, and says the education secretary can not dictate any specific academic standards to states. The new law, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, significantly shifts responsibility for improving schools back to the states.

And, on the other side of the ideological spectrum, a coalition of 36 civil rights groups is concerned the bill would not provide protections for minority children and other subgroups of students.

"Every student learns differently, which is why blanket education polices don't work", Fincher said.