



7 Things Slick Politicians Will Say To Make You Think They Oppose Common Core

By [Joy Pullmann](#)

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The heat on Common Core was high this spring, but I predict it will be even higher come state legislative sessions this January. It's the last year states can conceivably avoid joining the train wreck that will be Common Core tests, which are due to replace state tests in March and following. But the earnest moms and dads that comprise the Common Core grassroots have been largely burned by their representatives, who either have responded to serious arguments by relabeling Common Core or diverting blame for it. They're politicians, man, not representatives.

Post-midterms, Sen. Rand Paul decided to up the ante on his potential 2016 competition, telling Breitbart that [any Common Core-supporting presidential candidate is dead in the water](#): "I'm saying that that hypothetical candidate that's for Common Core probably doesn't have much chance of winning in a Republican primary."

So it's clearly incumbent on guys with eyes on 2016 to somehow placate voters. But they don't actually want to do anything about Common Core. Nooo, that might make education bureaucrats, the Obama administration, and the business lobby angry, and these have money and leverage enough to make any politician see fuzzy instead of fuzzy math. So here's what they'll do instead of actually addressing the problem.

1. Scott Walker: Let's Create Another Educrat Committee

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker has made a reputation for standing up to education thugs. But it appears that works best when he can use the thugs for fundraising. In July, watching his re-election poll numbers dive, he [issued a statement](#) calling on the legislature to repeal Common Core and replace it with "standards set by people in Wisconsin." Now, there's a huge difference between a governor issuing a statement and a governor putting muscle behind his statement. Anyone can say anything, and they usually do. The trick is to tell when a politician means something. Walker doesn't appear to mean anything except "please don't withhold votes from me as I continue to ignore you, GOP base." Both state lawmakers and local GOP leaders in Wisconsin have told me Walker's been essentially running away from Common Core ever since it became an issue. His statement hasn't changed anything.

We can see that by what Common Core legislation Walker did support during this year's legislative session. It would have merely had [a commission review Common Core and suggest](#)

[changes](#) to state Superintendent Tony Evers, a Democrat who signed Wisconsin into Common Core with the stroke of his pen months before Common Core was even published. Come to think of it, him signing Common Core before the public could see what was in it—that would qualify as Wisconsin having “standards set by people in Wisconsin.” Right? So nothing needs to change to meet Walker’s criteria. But some people might believe things had changed. How convenient.

By the way, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, another often mentioned for 2016, has [taken the same do-nothing tack](#). Not that that would surprise anyone.

2. Mike Pence: But We Can’t Lose Our NCLB Waiver

Speaking of giving educrats free rein to pretend things have changed, consider the sleight-of-hand voters endured from Indiana Gov. Mike Pence on Common Core. He and other Republican leaders in the state demanded that any legislation to repeal Common Core (from the final language of the bill Pence signed into law) “[c]omply with federal standards to receive a flexibility waiver” from No Child Left Behind. Remember that? The law everyone hates that Pence refused to vote for while in Congress? Somehow, on the way from Congress to governor, he apparently reversed his opposition to what, as a U.S. representative, [he criticized as](#) “a complex regimen of curriculum subsidies and national testing.”

Here’s [Pence’s statement on the waiver](#). The governor [who insisted Congress “must undo”](#) NCLB now piteously thanks Education Imperialist Arne Duncan for limitlessly expanding the law to exert his own arbitrary mandates over states and schools—which, by the way, upped the ante on national tests and enforced the mother of all curriculum mandates. Notice especially the doublespeak, in which administrative imperialism somehow becomes “local control.”

The approval of Indiana’s waiver request...gives us the ability to maintain local control of how federal education dollars are invested and to maintain the use of Indiana’s A-F school accountability system. The waiver also allows school districts and teachers to educate students in a manner determined by Hoosier educators and families in their local communities.

Since being elected Governor, I have consistently said that the Hoosier state needs to vigorously protect our commitment to high standards and to an accountability system that upholds those standards. I have also been clear that we need maximum flexibility under the law to develop our academic standards and accountability measures.

As Cato’s [Neal McCluskey prophesied at the time](#), bowing to Washington ultimately forced Indiana to replace Common Core with...Common Core. Pence [knew it, voted for it anyway](#), and proceeded to [trot around the country telling people](#) he’s the first governor to eliminate Common Core. This would be just politics as usual except that lots of innocent moms, dads, and kids who had trusted Pence to make good on his promise of something better than Common Core were in the process chucked under his campaign bus.

3. Mike Huckabee: It’s Not Common Core, It’s the Name

In February, [according to Fox News](#), former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee told the people who created Common Core that

state education leaders should be urged to ditch the ‘Common Core’ name, because it had become ‘toxic.’ ‘Rebrand it, refocus it, but don’t retreat,’ Huckabee said.

In other words, parents are stupid. They don’t hate Common Core because it’s an incomprehensible, academically mediocre, coercive, statist project. They hate it because they’re sheep and their talk-show shepherds have given them the secret “go-foaming-at-the-mouth-crazy” stimulus.

Also, the dozens of reputable think tanks, research institutions, and professors who have raised questions about Common Core or produced research showing it’s an inevitable failure, they’re all sheep, too. And if we lie to them and just repaint the crappy old barn, they’ll be too stupid to see through it and will cozy right up. Huckabee literally told people, “Don’t change what you’re doing, change what you’re calling it.” That confirms he’s [considering a presidential run](#).

Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad is among the many politicians taking Huckabee’s advice. He insists the term Common Core is “radioactive,” and that Iowa “need[s] to have Iowa standards,” but [has only strengthened his state’s connections with Common Core](#).

4. John Kasich: We Still Have Local Control

Apparently, Ohio Gov. John Kasich thinks Common Core was, and I quote, “[written by local school districts](#)” and he [hasn’t seen](#) that it “takes away from local control.” [Oh, and](#), “Until somebody can show me we’re eroding local control, I see no reason to do anything.”

It’s a little alarming Kasich knows so little about an electoral priority of his constituents. Common Core and Medicaid expansion are [the two top things Ohioans pester him](#) about. It is really easy to prove school districts did not write Common Core. Even some supporters will acknowledge that [two special-interest groups in D.C. convened a bunch of unelected bureaucrats to write Common Core](#).

The U.S. Department of Education’s former top lawyers have written [a report showing](#) both how imposing Common Core will lead inevitably to a national curriculum and that, in making this imposition, the Obama administration has likely broken several federal laws. And when Oklahoma rejected Common Core, [the feds yanked funds and imposed extra restrictions](#). Oh, yeah. States are free as a bird.

I think that’s reason enough to at least consider Common Core ain’t freely chosen by duly elected representatives of the people, and certainly not by the people ourselves. Otherwise, there’d be no mass revolt brewing.

5. Jeb Bush: I Will Never Support a National Curriculum

Here's former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, perhaps Common Core's biggest political backer, [on the Hugh Hewitt Show](#):

In fact, standards are different than curriculum, and that where I think the biggest misnomer is where people legitimately get concerned. I would be concerned if we had a national curriculum influenced by the federal government. My God, I'd break out in a rash.

He's technically right. The thing educrats call "standards" are actually mandates for what curriculum and lessons must contain and tests must measure. Common Core itself comprises 640 pages of such mandates. So it's not technically the same thing teachers call "curriculum." But Common Core does determine what curriculum contains. In other words, this is a distinction with very little difference, because when people such as Sen. Marco Rubio complain about federalizing education or nationalizing curriculum, what they're criticizing is specifying at a national level exactly what books or lessons or concepts children must learn. And Common Core does this.

6. Bobby Jindal: The Feds Ruined Common Core

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal is perhaps the gutsiest prominent elected official who criticizes Common Core, and the most (or perhaps even the only) willing to put his money where his mouth is, but he's telling an inaccurate story about these mandates. In that, he's in company with other politicians who are trying to deceive themselves and everyone else about this issue, including Pence, Bush, and Huckabee.

"The federal government has hijacked and destroyed the Common Core initiative," [Jindal said](#), in announcing a lawsuit against the federal government for conditioning education funds and favors on adopting Common Core. Jindal's nowhere near the only one. A [House resolution decrying federal Common Core coercion](#) insists on perpetuating the same technocrat CYA myth: "Whereas the development of the common education standards known as the Common Core State Standards was originally led by national organizations, but has transformed into an incentives-based mandate from the Federal Government..."

No, actually, the people who wrote Common Core [asked the federal government to push states into it and to pay for national tests](#). When the Obama administration came to power, it obliged.

7. Senators: I Can't Do Anything Because It's a State Issue

Sen. Lamar Alexander is the incoming chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, and Labor. He helped create one of the federal forerunners for Common Core, but under heavy pressure during the 2014 election [started insisting the feds should](#) "end the national school board and send all the decisions about Common Core back to Tennessee."

It's not clear there's much difference between the America 2000 legislation Alexander shepherded and the structures the U.S. Department of Education used to push states into Common Core. And he's still [listed as a Common Core supporter](#) on "Conservatives for Higher

Standards.” But he is also sponsoring legislation to remove federal pressure from Common Core, which in this era of partisan gang-ups is notable for not receiving support from all the Republicans. It’s instructive how many GOP senators are simply saying and doing nothing about Common Core. No action equals supporting Common Core, given that it’s Obama administration policy.

Two downed Democrat senators, North Carolina’s Kay Hagan and Louisiana’s Mary Landrieu, [insisted](#) that Common Core was [bereft](#) of federal involvement. That didn’t work out so well for them. But Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, who moves from HELP chair to former senator, [still considers Common Core](#) a “state issue.”

Here’s [a statement from Idaho Sen. Mike Crapo’s spokeswoman](#):

[Crapo] views it as a state issue already decided since the state accepted the standards and there is no need to interfere with the state’s wishes.

Apparently Crapo didn’t know or didn’t think to have a staffer Google up the truth that the federal government has a) funded national Common Core tests, which are its crucial enforcement mechanism and b) required states to adopt Common Core if they want an NCLB waiver or a shot at a \$4.35 billion slush fund Congress, in all its intelligence, handed to Czar Duncan.

Oh, and it’s also [sending states millions to create identical student databases that plug directly into Common Core K-12 testing pipelines](#) so everyone’s personal information can be collected in a government dossier. Are these senators saying they have no power to stop things they or their predecessors (mostly) authorized? Are they saying they can’t sign onto [bills that prevent federal involvement](#) with Common Core, testing, or curriculum? That once an executive decides to run all over Congress and the laws, no one can stop him?

If so, time to get someone else into their offices who thinks Congress is more than a bunch of bobble heads. At the very least, they could be honest like Louisiana Sen. David Vitter, who recently went from supporting Common Core to opposing it, and to prove his conversion has introduced a bill that would [prohibit the federal government from](#) mandating or incentivizing curriculum mandates, tests, or curriculum. It seems to be a strong bill, but here’s the problem: The U.S. Department of Education is [already ignoring three laws that prohibit](#) its Common Core-pushing. Adding another doesn’t seem likely to change its behavior. That means what really needs to happen is cutting USDOE off at the knees by slashing its budget and responsibilities.

Any takers? Rand Paul? Anyone?