
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Building a Stronger Economy: Spurring Reform and Innovation In American Education”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Building a Stronger Economy: Spurring Reform and Innovation In American Education”.*

Good morning.

Secretary Duncan, thank you for joining us for your second appearance before this Committee.

Last May, you gave us an overview of President Obama’s education agenda, from cradle to career.

You discussed the administration’s unprecedented commitment to incentivizing education reforms through the Race to the Top program.

You told us about the administration’s 2010 budget, which proposed groundbreaking initiatives to improve early education and college access and completion.

Under your direction, the Department of Education has since made tremendous progress on those goals.

The Recovery Act funded 300,000 education jobs, supporting teachers, librarians and counselors.

The carrot approach of Race to the Top is already proving to be a catalyst for change.

Forty states and the District of Columbia have applied to compete by focusing on data-driven reforms that will strengthen the quality of teachers, standards, assessments and help turn around struggling schools.

We’ll hear more about this progress today.

And last fall, with your help and support, the House passed President Obama’s proposal to originate all new federal student loans through the reliable and cost-effective Direct Loan program.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates this will save \$87 billion over 10 years.

We will use these savings to raise the bar for early learning, transform community colleges, modernize schools, and make historic investments in student aid.

Many colleges are already taking steps to offer Direct Loans to better protect students from shaky credit markets.

We hope the Senate will soon take decisive action on behalf of millions of families by voting to make college more affordable and invest in students and taxpayers – instead of banks.

If Congress wants to show we're serious about changing Washington, this bill is a great place to start.

Today you are here to tell us how you – and we – can build a stronger economy by providing our students with the knowledge and skills they need to compete globally.

For the second year in a row, President Obama's budget reflects his innovative vision for education.

It requests a \$4.5 billion increase over last year in the Department of Education and a \$2.5 billion increase for early education at Health and Human Services, a signal of his belief that a strong early education is vital to student success down the road.

It calls for fixing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently known as No Child Left Behind, and sets aside \$1 billion if Congress reaches that goal.

It calls for Congress to enact the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act.

Mr. Secretary, you have frequently said that we need to “educate our way to a better economy.”

Across the political spectrum, I think we all agree.

Too many of our students are not reaching their full academic potential, through no fault of their own.

They are not being taught to the same rigorous standards as their international peers.

They also aren't getting a strong foundation in math, science and other innovative fields.

College presidents tell us high school graduates aren't ready for college.

Business leaders and CEOs tell us they can't find workers who are trained for the jobs of the future.

It's time to finally do something about the education crisis in this country that impacts our competitiveness and our position as a leader in a global economy.

President Obama has set a critical goal of producing the most college graduates in the world by 2020.

To get there, we will need to reform ESEA so that it fulfills its promise of an excellent education for every student that prepares them for the rigors of college and good jobs.

In recent years, a seismic shift has been happening in our schools and in our conversations about education.

There is now willingness to consider ideas that just a few years ago were controversial – such as performance pay.

There is now an understanding that you can give states and districts the room to innovate without watering down accountability or standards.

Several weeks ago, we announced that we're moving forward with a bipartisan, open and transparent effort to overhaul our nation's education laws.

We will seek input from all stakeholders who share our serious interest in improving our schools.

And we'll look to you throughout the process, Mr. Secretary.

You've already shown us tremendous leadership and you've revitalized the Department. You've established that the status quo is no longer acceptable.

We look forward to continue working with you to ensure a top-notch education – and all of the opportunities it promises – for every student in America.

Thank you.

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