
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Tuesday, December 8, 2009
Press Office, 202-226-0853

Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Improving Our Competitiveness: Common Core Education Standards”

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 “Improving Our Competitiveness: Common Core Education Standards.”*

This morning, our Committee meets to hold the second in a series of hearings looking at how we can improve our global competitiveness through a state-led to adopt a common core of internationally benchmarked standards.

At our first hearing in April, we learned about the state-led effort to improve academic standards in our schools.

Witnesses told us about the momentum and support from not just the education community, but business leaders and stakeholders from across the political spectrum.

I was glad to see bipartisan support from Members of this Committee.

Today we will hear from our panel about the significant progress that has been made since that hearing. Forty-eight states have now signed on to this initiative. They agree that this state-led effort is critical to regain our role as a world leader in education.

They know that we must ensure that all students are prepared for success in college or a career.

I couldn't agree more and we need to do everything we can to support their effort. One of the problems we have encountered with No Child Left Behind is that the law required every state to set its own academic standards and use assessments aligned with those standards.

Without a unified set of strong expectations, many states chose to lower the bar -- creating a race to the bottom.

The result is that children in Mississippi may not be pushed with the same rigor as children in Massachusetts.

The quality of education a student may receive is left up to their zip code. It's a matter of geographical luck.

Having 50 different standards in 50 different states undermines America's education system.

In this system, a high school diploma doesn't guarantee that a student has mastered the academic tools they will need to compete in today's world.

All children should be challenged to develop the complex skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the jobs of the future.

We are in the process of rebuilding our economy and restoring our competitiveness.

That means focusing not just on immediate job creation, but also what we can do to build a solid economic foundation for generations to come.

Today's students -- our future workers -- need to be prepared for jobs in high-growth industries, to innovate, and to think creatively to help solve our next great challenges.

But we're still lacking academically compared with other high-performing countries.

American students lag about a year behind students in the top-performing countries in math. Even our best students performed worse in math than their peers in 22 other countries.

Only 1.3 percent of 15 year olds in this country performed at the highest level in math on an international assessment test. In the top 10 countries, up to seven times as many students were at the highest levels. It is clear we have our job cut out for us.

An important step is this state-led effort for a common core of internationally-benchmarked standards that can prepare all children in this country to achieve and succeed in this global economy.

The historic investments we made in President Obama's Recovery Act were a great start.

Secretary Duncan's Race to the Top Fund is already helping spur reform in standards and assessments without yet having spent a dollar. This gives us reason to be optimistic that we will see the seismic shift in education that our country needs.

A recent survey from the Center on Education Policy showed that states are confident they can meet the assurances required by the Recovery Act, especially to create and adopt rigorous academic standards.

I commend the Governors, chief state school officers, Achieve, ACT, the College Board, and all of the partners in the common core initiative for their leadership.

I look to hearing from our witnesses about how we can ensure that all students, in every state, in every grade, get a world-class education that fully prepares them for college and careers.

Thank you.