

ADVERTISEMENT

EDITORIAL EDITORIALS

Time for a stronger No Child Left Behind

By THE TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD
JUL 20, 2015 | 5:00 AM



TOPICS

SUBSCRIBE
4 weeks for only 99¢

LOG IN

TRIAL OFFER | 4 weeks for 99¢

TRIAL OFFER

SUPPORT QUALITY NEWS
4 weeks for 99¢

SAVE NOW

Here are two things that should seem obvious about the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the George W. Bush-era law that for the last 14 years has, for both better and worse, been pushing schools to improve education for disadvantaged students:

One is that the nation's schools have waited far too long for a new version. The law itself has all but collapsed, and it has been replaced by a complicated and problematic system in which states are given waivers from some of its requirements. The U.S. Department of Education's sometimes clumsy policymaking has led to widespread upheaval and a congressional revolt against federal control over schools. Today, Congress is closer to a reauthorization than it's been at any point since 2002. Within the last two weeks, the House and Senate have passed separate bills, and it's now time to reconcile the two versions and put a strong new law in place. No more delays.

Second, the new law has to look a lot different than the original. It should be more realistic — schools were given 14 years under No Child Left Behind to bring every student in the country to full academic proficiency — and less arbitrary in its measurement of school progress. It should be less prescriptive and punitive in its remedies for low-performing schools, and less authority should be centralized in the often out-of-touch U.S. Department of Education. At the same time, it should require some level of actual accountability from schools. The federal government has the right — the obligation, really — to ensure that Title I funding for low-income students is spent effectively.

Both the House and Senate attempts at revising the law would make it less onerous and centralized. They would do away with Annual Yearly Progress, a complicated and extremely rigid process for using annual test scores to determine which schools are falling short and then mandating a range of interventions, many of them punitive. The annual tests would continue, and the results would be publicly reported, but states would devise their own systems for determining which schools were not meeting standards and what to do about it. Neither bill requires states to use standardized test scores to measure teachers' effectiveness, a significant slap to the Obama administration, which has pressured states to do just that. And in open rebellion over the controversial Common Core curriculum standards, which were heavily pushed by the U.S. Education Department, both bills would forbid the federal government from pressing specific academic standards on states.



ADVERTISEMENT

The House bill, passed by Republican lawmakers in a highly partisan vote, continues in this states' rights vein. It doesn't set even a flexible standard for what students should learn, and it doesn't call on states to take steps to improve persistently low-performing schools. But what's the point of all the testing if there's no mandate that

TRIAL OFFER

SUPPORT QUALITY NEWS
4 weeks for 99¢

SAVE NOW

In contrast, the Senate bill, a rare example of bipartisan cooperation, comes much closer to the mark. Although states would set their own standards, those standards would have to prepare students for jobs or, for the college-bound, give them the ability to do university-level work without remedial courses. States would measure academic improvement as they see fit and determine when low-performing schools aren't getting better fast enough. This would be a great improvement over No Child Left Behind.

The Senate bill should prevail. It shifts most school governance back to the states, setting reasonable expectations but with greater flexibility to allow more innovation. It's missing one thing, however: Though states are encouraged to intervene to help their lowest-performing schools, they're not required to do so. They should be.

Intervention could mean extra funding, better teacher training or the help of an outside consultant rather than overreliance on staff firings, takeovers and other harsh measures, as mandated under No Child Left Behind. Reducing the punitive consequences of No Child Left Behind would have the side benefit of reducing "teaching to the test," once teachers and administrators no longer felt that their jobs were threatened by student results on a single annual exam. But if states can just ignore schools that are doing a bad job, the nation will fail at the job of producing an educated population.



PAID POST

What's This?



Generating retirement income starts with a financial plan.

A message from Charles Schwab

Whether you're already in retirement or approaching it, get the answers you need to the retirement income questions you have from Schwab.

[SEE MORE](#)

Follow the Opinion section on Twitter [@latimesopinion](#) and [Facebook](#)



Opinion Newsletter

Weekly

Op-eds and editorials on the most important topics of the day.

ENTER YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS



The Times Editorial Board



TRIAL OFFER

SUPPORT QUALITY NEWS

4 weeks for 99¢

SAVE NOW

ADVERTISEMENT

BE THE FIRST TO COMMENT

LATEST NEWS

Designer Kate Spade's death renews conversation about mental health awareness

17m



Russia conspiracies, custody battles: Claire Danes has had it tough on 'Homeland'

32m



Ethics, schmethics, America really needs to know why Scott Pruitt wanted a used Trump hotel mattress

42m



Bollywood filmmaker Uday Chopra seeks \$3.8 million for Hollywood Hills villa

42m



California primary to decide which two candidates for governor will make November ballot

42m



LATEST EDITORIALS

The thankless task facing LAPD's new chief Michel Moore — updating police culture nationwide

4:15 AM



The Supreme Court squanders an opportunity for lasting justice in the wedding cake case



TRIAL OFFER

SUPPORT QUALITY NEWS
4 weeks for 99¢

SAVE NOW



The L.A. Times' recommendations in the June 5 election

JUN 4, 2018



A new report affirms what we already know: Easier access to guns means more violent deaths

JUN 4, 2018



FROM AROUND THE WEB

Sponsored Links by Taboola

U.S Cardiologist: I Urge Americans To Quit 3 Foods

Gundry MD

Glendale Offers No Cost Solar to SCE Customers

The Solar Institute

I Finally Tried This New Electric Toothbrush

Cup of Jo | quip

Which Travel Card Has The Most Valuable Miles?

Nerdwallet

Born Before 1985? California Will Pay Off Your Mortgage

Mortgage Quotes | Fetcharate

Identical Sisters Born In 2010 Have Grown Up To Become Most Beautiful Twins In The World

Give It Love

Play this for 1 minute and see why everyone is addicted

Throne: Free Online Game

Google May Not Show You This, Enter Any Name

TruthFinder People Search Subscription

TRIAL OFFER

SUPPORT QUALITY NEWS
4 weeks for 99¢

SAVE NOW

Sign up for our newsletters
Subscribe for unlimited
access

[About us](#)
[Contact us](#)
[Privacy policy](#)
[Terms](#)
[Site map](#)
[E-Newspaper](#)

[Corrections](#)
[Archives](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Find a job](#)
[Shop](#)
[Advertising](#)



Copyright © 2018, Los Angeles Times

TRIAL OFFER

SUPPORT QUALITY NEWS
4 weeks for 99¢

SAVE NOW