

STATEMENT BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON PRESIDENT BUSH'S AGENDA FOR THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

Washington, D.C. – Today, Senator Edward M. Kennedy released the following statement, also included is a fact sheet:

“The No Child Left Behind Act is a landmark commitment to closing the achievement gap, and increasing opportunities for each of our students to learn and receive a quality education. We must renew and reaffirm those goals, but we need to ensure that the law works for our students. We need new and creative ideas that will help our schools and students succeed. We also need to fund the law. We’ve urged the President to send a message in this year’s budget that every child counts and deserves the benefits of our liberty.”

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act has laid the groundwork for major improvements in schools across the country. But we have learned a great deal over the last five years about how the law is working, from parents, students and educators. Congress must consider new ideas that will help strengthen the law and help schools move forward to confront the challenges of closing the achievement gap. Congress must think creatively about improving teacher quality, empowering parents, and ensuring that students are learning to globally competitive standards, while ensuring that schools get the interventions they need to improve – not just a label – when they have missed their academic goals. Our nation’s middle and high schools need greater attention, to promote innovation and provide students with extra help to keep up with rigorous curriculum.

The President’s NCLB Agenda

Congress is ready to address new and creative ideas for helping No Child Left Behind work in our schools. Instead, the President has proposed more of the same. Once again, he proposes siphoning crucial resources from our public schools – already reeling from increased requirements and budget cuts -- for a private school voucher program. The No Child Left Behind Act made a commitment to improving public schools. This reauthorization should build on that bipartisan goal and not allow partisan initiatives to get in the way.

I appreciate the President’s desire to preserve the law’s focus on closing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students have good teachers, and I look forward to working with the President on these objectives. But experience has shown that these good results are not possible without new investments. Half of all public school districts are facing federal budget cuts. The President’s Budget should demonstrate that leaving no child left behind is moral commitment, not a political slogan.

The Bottom Line

Much work needs to be done on No Child Left Behind, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the 110th Congress to improve and strengthen the law. NCLB has been severely underfunded, but with a new and long-overdue financial commitment, and a close look at what’s working and not working, we can help our schools close the achievement gap, recruit and keep the best teachers, and implement effective accountability systems.

We need new and creative ideas for helping our schools to improve and our students to succeed. Instead, the President has proposed more of the same. Once again, he proposes siphoning crucial resources from our public schools – already reeling from increased requirements and budget cuts -- for a private school voucher program.

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I'm glad the President will recognize the need to preserve the law's focus on closing the achievement gap and the importance of ensuring that all students can graduate ready to succeed in our global economy.

But experience has shown that these results are not possible without new investments. We've urged the President to send a message in this year's budget that every child counts and deserves the benefits of our liberty.

No child means no child, and we must be willing to make the tough choices and the hard sacrifices to invest in and improve education in America – it's the key to future opportunity and success for every one of our children.