



## ***HELP Chairman Tom Harkin Introduces the “Strengthening America’s Schools Act of 2013”***

### ***Bill One-Pager***

We have a vital national interest in what happens in our local schools. In order to remain globally competitive, we must ensure all of America’s children graduate college- and career-ready. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) provided important information on student performance and accountability for federal dollars, but it also unintentionally led to lower standards, a narrowing of the curriculum, and “one size fits all” approach to school improvement. NCLB must be replaced with a law that is fair to students and teachers and provides our states and districts with the certainty, support, and freedom they need to prepare all children for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### ***No Child Left Behind was criticized for:***

- Setting inflexible benchmarks without taking into consideration the different needs of schools and without recognizing student progress.
- Mandating the same federal sanctions for all schools that created a pressure to “teach to the test.”
- Requiring states and schools to adhere to prescriptive, Washington-generated accountability models.
- Forcing school districts to spend money on activities that did not make sense for all students or schools.

#### ***The Strengthening America’s Schools Act will:***

- Establishes a new partnership of “shared responsibility” that recognizes the freedom that states and districts need to implement their own accountability systems and interventions to improve schools; while:
  - Not stepping away from the federal government’s responsibility to our most vulnerable children by providing every child the opportunity to achieve their full potential.
  - Providing states and school districts the supports they need to prepare all students for success, including students with disabilities and English learners, through smarter assessments and supports that recognize and reward growth in student achievement.
  - Supporting a professional environment for teachers and principals through locally-developed evaluation systems that inform professional development and lead to better supports for teachers and principals and, most importantly, greater success for students.
- Helps more children access high quality preschool and foster collaboration between early childhood programs and school systems to ensure that children start school ready to learn.

- Gets the federal government out of the business of “micromanaging” schools and instead enables states and districts to focus on turning around chronically struggling schools and those with significant achievement gaps.
- Enhances student success by promoting safe and healthy schools that provide a well-rounded education with time for the arts and physical activity.
- Builds on one of the universally-recognized success of NCLB by improving the disaggregated information that parents, families and communities have come to expect so they know how well schools are educating their students.