NSBA Praises Senate for Passing Bipartisan Education Bill to Restore Local Governance in Public Education

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) commends the U.S. Senate for passing a bipartisan, bicameral bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (S.1177). During the reauthorization process, there was a collective effort by NSBA and local school board members to advocate before members of Congress for a modernized education law that underscores the importance of local governance, protects federal investments in Title I grants for disadvantaged students, and prevents the diversion of public tax dollars for private use.

"NSBA applauds lawmakers in the House and Senate for their commitment to passing a modernized law that preserves important federal cornerstones, such as equity and excellence, while establishing a 'new federalism' in education policy – upholding local governance and creating a new federal-state-local partnership to ensure that states and local school board members are better positioned to provide all students with a world class public education," stated Thomas J. Gentzel, Executive Director of the National School Boards Association.

The work of NSBA’s legislative governing body, the Delegate Assembly, informed the development of provisions to support local governance in the legislation. Senators Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Angus King (I-Maine) introduced the tri-partisan local governance measure, which was included in S.1177 passed by the Senate. The provision strengthens support for local autonomy in managing school administration, budget development, and related operations for school district responsibilities – all important to continuous improvement for student achievement.

"Today’s passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act is a true testament to the unprecedented activism by our nation’s 90,000 local school board members and reflects a strong national interest to restore local governance and community ownership in public education," said Gentzel. In light of this historic milestone, NSBA will continue to work with Congress and the Administration in addressing the flexibility states and local school districts need to ensure equity and excellence in public education such as the development of innovative programs that address the unique needs of each school district and respective community, programmatic flexibility for school districts, and recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers and leaders.

Senator Heidi Heitkamp

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Thomas J. Gentzel

Senator John Hoeven

NDSBA 2016 Negotiations Seminar

The NDSBA Negotiations Seminar is scheduled for February 11-12 at the Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck. This event provides information for school board members and superintendents on the negotiations process. Early bird topics will be held on Thursday, February 11. Friday’s one-day Negotiations Seminar will include topics such as preparation and strategy, the recognition process, an update on legislation passed during the 2015 session, declaring impasse, and issuing teacher contracts.
Baesler: New Law Restores Education Authority to States

North Dakota State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said that a sweeping new federal education law, called the Every Student Succeeds Act, takes important steps to restore control of North Dakota education policy to local and state officials, where it belongs.

“With the approval of this law, we can shape our school systems in North Dakota based on our own values and what we know is important to the students in our state,” Baesler said at a news conference at the state Capitol.

The new law replaces No Child Left Behind, a federal law that Congress has been struggling to rewrite for the past eight years. It focused on using standardized tests in English, mathematics, and science as measurements for school district accountability and specified penalties for schools that failed to make “adequate yearly progress” on tests.

Baesler said the North Dakota State Assessment is going to be shortened this spring. The validity and reliability of the English and math exams will be retained, while reducing the amount of time our students spend taking tests. “This will give our teachers more time to teach,” Baesler said.

The Department of Public Instruction also plans to begin a routine, deliberative review of North Dakota’s English and mathematics standards to ensure our standards reflect North Dakota’s goals, values, and expectations.

The present standards were approved in 2011. Normally, the department does a standards review every five to seven years. Baesler said the review will discover which standards our North Dakota educators feel confident in teaching and which ones may require more support.

“Our teachers deserve more time and support with these standards,” Baesler said.

In March 2013, three months after she first took office, Baesler withdrew North Dakota’s waiver application. Her decision was made with the support of North Dakota United, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, and the North Dakota School Boards Association.

“At that time we decided we were going to focus our efforts on getting a new federal law to replace No Child Left Behind,” Baesler said. “Now that goal has almost been reached, and I believe our steadfast approach has brought us results.”

Under the new law, Baesler said North Dakota will still have challenging academic standards and more control over assessments.

The state must write an accountability plan for education. Baesler said that during the next 18 to 20 months, she will bring together K-12 stakeholders to write our state plan based on what we value and what we know makes a quality school.

“Once we determine what we want to measure, we will also be able to determine what needs to be done to help our lowest performing schools,” Baesler said.

Jon Martinson, NDSBA executive director, comments during State Superintendent Baesler’s press conference on passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act. From the left are Nick Archuleta, North Dakota United; Aimee Copas, NDCEL, Superintendent Baesler; and Jon Godfread, North Dakota Chamber of Commerce.
New Federal Education Bill Takes Effect in 2017

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) became a thing of the past last week when new federal law, called the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed the U.S. Senate and was signed by the President. That was exciting, historic, and a long-time coming.

Years ago when State Superintendent Baesler was president of the Mandan School Board, we traveled to Washington, D.C., with other school board members and met with North Dakota’s Congressional Delegation each year for the past ten years. We discussed flaws in NCLB and the need to return authority to educate students back to the states.

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act:

• Gone are the days of excessive federal intrusion in education policy
• Gone are the days of overreach by the U.S. Department of Education
• Gone are the days of “one-size-fits-all” education policy
• Gone are the days of excessive testing and stifling teacher creativity and innovation in the classroom
• Gone are the days of adequate yearly progress that set a statistically impossible goal of requiring 100 percent of students to be “proficient” thereby giving the public the false impression that our public schools were failing and good schools became “in need of improvement schools.”

This modernization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act acknowledges a position long held by our association that the best education decisions are made at the state and local level.

We thank Congressman Cramer and Senators Hoeven and Heitkamp for their strong support for education and for voting to support the reauthorization of ESEA.

Our association looks forward to working with the governor, Superintendent Baesler, administrators, teachers, and other partners to implement this new plan.

Early Childhood Education Grants

The 2015 Legislative Assembly appropriated $3 million for the purpose of providing early childhood education grants. The grants are to be made available to public and private sector providers of early childhood education services if the providers participate in a local consortium that identifies all available options for cost-effectively maximizing the provision of early childhood services within the boundaries of a school district, if the providers operate an “approved” early childhood education program, if their program incorporates at least 10 hours of parental involvement, and if they accept children of all learning abilities into their program. Among the statutory requirements for an approved program is that the children must be taught by individuals who are licensed or approved to teach in early childhood education by the Education Standards and Practices Board.

The grants, which are payable beginning July 1, 2016, equal $2000 for each child who is eligible for free lunch and $1000 for each child who is eligible for a reduced-price lunch.

Valley City School District
Contact: Jon Martinson
(701) 255-4127
Email: jon.martinson@ndsba.org
Position begins July 1, 2016
Application: www.ndsba.org
Deadline: January 15, 2016

Linton School District
Contact: Jon Martinson
(701)-255-4127
Email: jon.martinson@ndsba.org
Position begins: July 1, 2016
Application: www.ndsba.org
Deadline: January 25, 2016

Mott/Regent School District
Contact: Jon Martinson
(701)-255-4127
Email: jon.martinson@ndsba.org
Position begins: July 1, 2016
Application: www.ndsba.org
Deadline: February 1, 2016

While the program was developed in part to elevate the educational aspects of childcare, some providers are finding it difficult, in light of the overall teacher shortage, to attract individuals who meet the licensure criteria. Others have entered into partnerships with their local school districts. School district superintendents are required to initiate the consortium development process by inviting all public and private providers of early childhood services within their districts to a meeting. School boards are required to provide advice and guidance to coalitions regarding all aspects of the grant program.

Potential grant recipients must submit an application to the Department of Commerce. Although the legislation does not reference a deadline for applications, the Workforce Development Division of the Department of Commerce has designated April 1, 2016, as the application deadline. Additional information about the early childhood grant program can be found at http://www.workforce.nd.gov/uploads/13/cecegrantguidance.pdf.
Season's Greetings

From Alyssa, Anita, Jon, Julie, Linnae, and Patty