

May 3, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, and Representative Pelosi:

As state and local officials committed to ensuring that 49 million American school children are prepared for success in life, we urge you to complete the long overdue reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The House Education and the Workforce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee have passed bills, and the House and Senate need to move their respective bills to the floor for action if there is any chance of having reauthorization accomplished before the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourns.

ESEA's last reauthorization as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) had a commendable intent—to identify the unmet needs of all children in our schools and to promote education reform—but was also flawed. It shifted too much control away from state and local elected officials, diluted the impact of federal resources, and relied on a method of identifying academic progress that focused on failure instead of rewarding excellence. Ten years later, it is past time to rewrite the law and correct its mistakes.

Policymakers at the state, local and school district level need a resolution to these issues. We need certainty in federal policy at a time when we are struggling with reallocating scarce education resources to fund what works. We need federal policy that instead of focusing on process and compliance, allows for state and local innovation.

Without changes to NCLB, many states turned to the immediate flexibility offered by the U.S. Department of Education through the waiver process. However, waivers only provide temporary relief from specific provisions of the law and leave states that face challenges in meeting the reform criteria for obtaining a waiver struggling to meet the unreasonable requirements of NCLB. Federal policy must not set up a system that disadvantages some states and some students.

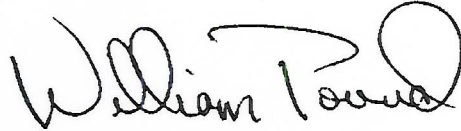
We deeply appreciate the leadership you have already shown, and realize that completing a complex piece of legislation like ESEA is a difficult task. By moving these bills to conference, Congress can act in a bicameral and bipartisan fashion to craft an ESEA reauthorization that secures the reforms necessary to ensure our nation's children have the best chance to succeed.

To this end, we urge all members of Congress to work with you and prioritize our nation's education system as "must pass" legislation. We stand ready to work with you to complete ESEA reauthorization so that every state, district, school, and student may benefit from a federal elementary and secondary education law that works.

Sincerely,



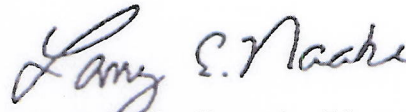
Dan Crippen, Executive Director  
National Governors Association



William T. Pound, Executive Director  
National Conference of State Legislatures



David Adkins, CEO and Executive Director  
The Council of State Governments



Larry E. Naake, Executive Director  
National Association of Counties



Donald J. Borut, Executive Director  
National League of Cities



Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director  
United States Conference of Mayors



Robert J. O'Neill, Jr., Executive Director  
International City/County Management Association



James Kohlmoos, CEO and Executive Director  
National Association of State Boards of Education



Gene Wilhoit, Executive Director  
Council of Chief State School Officers



Anne L. Bryant, Executive Director  
National School Boards Association