



5 Reasons Why Sen. Alexander's Education Bill Fails Teachers

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Earlier this month, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) proposed a bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA.¹ The bill misses an opportunity to emphasize new investments focusing on elevating the teaching profession and fails to push for policy changes targeted at maintaining and recruiting a diverse, high-achieving workforce of teachers and leaders. Here are five reasons Sen. Alexander's bill harms teachers:

- 1. Opens the door to severe budget cuts:** Sen. Alexander's bill eliminates the ESEA's "maintenance of effort" provision, which requires districts that receive Title I funding—designed to help low income and disadvantaged students—to maintain approximately the same spending levels on education from year to year. Without this provision, states and localities would be free to slash education budgets, resulting in layoffs, furlough days, and reductions in coaching and support or compensation increases.
- 2. Dilutes targeted funding for teachers and allows it to be used for other purposes:** Sen. Alexander's bill allows states to redirect Title II funds, which are dedicated to supporting teachers and reducing class size, toward other educational programming if they choose. This provision puts at risk the support and development that many teachers rely on for professional growth, including classroom aides.
- 3. Does little to push for better, fairer, and fewer tests:** Although Sen. Alexander's bill proposes two options for federally required tests, neither would reduce the amount of time teachers spend on test preparation geared toward helping students pass fill-in-the-bubble tests. ESEA reauthorization would be a missed opportunity if it fails to reduce testing at the state and district level, where the majority of tests are required. The bill ought to require districts to audit their testing calendars and remove duplicative, unnecessary tests while also investing in next-generation assessments that measure higher-level critical thinking and problem solving skills.

4. **Misses an opportunity to leverage change:** Sen. Alexander should seize this opportunity to revamp Title II—the part of the ESEA that provides for professional development and support—and create systemic changes to grow and maintain a high-achieving, diverse teacher workforce, such as improving teacher preparation, providing intensive induction for new teachers, and supporting job-embedded professional development, coaching, and innovative compensation systems that stretch dollars further.

5. **Cuts \$163 million of federal spending on Title II, funding designed to support teachers:**² Sen. Alexander’s bill decreases funding levels and misses an opportunity to increase investments to help states improve the teacher pipeline, increase educator salaries, offer better training and professional development, and put the teaching profession on an overall higher pedestal similar to a doctor or lawyer.

Endnotes

1 *Every Child Ready for College or Career Act of 2015*, forthcoming, 114 Cong. 1 sess., available at <http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/AEG15033.pdf>.

2 U.S. Department of Education, “Title II — Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals: Part A — Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund,” available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg20.html> (last accessed January 2015); *Every Child Ready for College or Career Act of 2015*.