



# Doc H's Blog

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## The changing odds on ESEA reauthorization

Over the past few months, I have written numerous blogs about the need for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

This past week, I joined 48 other state chiefs and deputies in Washington, D.C. to continue to push for reauthorization. We were honored to meet with President Obama, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), Rep. John Kline (R-MN) and Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA). Sen. Alexander is chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) committee; Sen. Murray is the ranking member. Rep. Kline is chair of the House Workforce and Education committee.

ESEA reauthorization is critical. Let me offer a couple of reasons why.

- No Child Left Behind (2001) is broken and is no longer a valid method of accountability for our nation's public schools.
- While waivers granted by the United States Department of Education have served as a stop-gap fix, the nation's schools deserve stability and long term direction from Congress.
- The waiver process has led to the possibility of federal intrusion in states. For example, the original No Child Left Behind did not require states to address teacher evaluation; however, the waiver process has made that a requirement of states.
- While the Obama administration has been fairly flexible in the implementation of waivers, it is possible that the next administration could eliminate waivers or put more conditions into the waiver process that many states would not be able to implement.

Perhaps the key reason for reauthorization is the need for changes to the law of the land. If Kentucky were not able to get a waiver to NCLB, our school districts would have to notify parents that every school in their district was a low performing school (defined as not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB). Losing a waiver and having to go back to NCLB requirements would mean that Kentucky school districts would lose flexibility on how they use more than \$58 million in Title I monies and on other NCLB programs. In addition, school districts would be required to return to set asides for transportation, supplemental education services, school choice and professional development.

My take from the last week is that Sen. Alexander and Sen. Murray are working hard to find a way to get bipartisan support. Rep Kline is having difficulty getting enough Republican votes to pass a bill. The way the process should work is that House passes a bill, the Senate passes a bill, and then a conference committee is formed to work out the differences. Usually, the President and Sec. Duncan would be involved in working with the conference committee to get a bill that the President could sign.

I told an audience this week that in Kentucky we know a lot about basketball, bourbon and betting on horses. If I were to handicap the chances of ESEA reauthorization, it is probably an 80:1 shot that it will be reauthorized. I would encourage readers to let members of the [Kentucky delegation](#) (especially House members) know how important it is for Congress to reauthorize the nation's main law governing education.

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