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**Subject:** TN Asks Feds For NCLB Waiver

Chiefs – just an FYI on TN request for ESEA waiver.

--John

## State Asks Feds For NCLB Waiver

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By **Bill Dries**

*Updated 2:24PM*

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Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam says the state is asking federal education officials to give the state a waiver in meeting federal education standards under the No Child Left Behind program.

Haslam and Tennessee Education Commissioner [Kevin Huffman](#) announced the application for the waiver as they released figures for state public school districts measuring average yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB.

Haslam is one of several governors who have called for changes in NCLB that gives school districts and states more credit for making improvements toward meeting the standards even if they don't attain the standards.

Haslam said he made the formal request for a waiver when it became apparent a rethinking of the George W. Bush era federal standards wasn't likely anytime soon.

"Applying for a waiver is not about making excuses in Tennessee," Haslam said noting Tennessee is in the second year of tougher achievement test standards.

Huffman was even more outspoken about the need to bypass the federal standards.

He said the AYP standards "no longer serve the interest of education reform in Tennessee."

"We want to be held accountable for results," he said in a conference call with Haslam with reporters across the state.

"We should be looking at school and district trajectories. ... We should hold schools, districts and the state accountable for improvements. AYP is no longer a standard for measuring that."

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who has championed recent education reform efforts in Tennessee during both the Bredesen and Haslam administrations, has also talked of changing the NCLB standards. And several governors of

other states have indicated they would apply for a waiver.

U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, a former Tennessee governor and U.S. secretary of education, called earlier this year for dropping AYP and letting state and local leaders determine whether a school was failing or achieving at an adequate level.

Key to the calls by Alexander and others has been the adoption of core education standards by leaders of most of the 50 states including Tennessee.

That has set up two standards for educators, Huffman said – one that is realistic and another set of standards that don't give enough credit for improvements and would eventually put all schools in a category of failing to make adequate progress without a change at the federal level.

“We are well positioned to do this,” Haslam said of getting federal approval of the waiver, “because of our own tough accountability standards.”