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Date: Tue, 8/9/2011 5:43:49 PM

Subject: FW: Reaction Pours in on NCLB Waiver Announcement - Chiefs forChange

An article on waivers mentioning Chiefs for Change position.

From: John Bailey [mailto:johnbailey63@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 2:07 PM

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Cc: Hanna Skandera; Leighann Lenti

Subject: Reaction Pours in on NCLB Waiver Announcement

Reaction Pours in on NCLB Waiver Announcement

Campaign K-12



The reviews are pouring in on the administration's **announcement** this morning that it will definitely offer states wiggle room in meeting parts of the No Child Left Behind Act—in exchange for embracing certain reforms-to-be-named-later.

The administration didn't release any new details on just what those waivers would look like. Still, states are beginning to line up. On the heels of the announcement, Minnesota and South Carolina officials **said** they planned to ask for waivers. (Tennessee, Kentucky, and Michigan have already submitted plans.)

Other state officials just gave a thumbs up to the general idea of waivers, including Tony Evers, the superintendent in Wisconsin, and Patricia Wright, Virginia's superintendent of public instruction.

Chiefs for Change, a bipartisan coalition of reform-minded state education leaders, is also on board with the idea of waivers, although the group cautions that the department should keep the bar high and only approve plans that "will advance, strengthen, or accelerate a systemic change in education at state and district levels."

Of course, it's probably pretty easy for state officials to cheer the administration's waiver plan when there aren't any real details out yet. It will be interesting to see how many of these folks are still on Team Waiver when the administration gets into the nitty-gritty. For instance, South Carolina seems to be on board with the waiver plan, but it didn't want a Race to the Top grant that could have come with similar strings.

Already, some folks are sounding a note of caution. A joint letter from The Education Trust, the National Council of La Raza, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce includes a litany of ideas for the administration, including the suggestion that waivers be limited to two years, in part so that the chance for congressional action remains. Check out the full letter **here**.

The nation's largest teachers' union, the National Education Association, thinks conditional waivers are the wrong way to go. "What we need now is teacher-led and student-focused comprehensive reform instead of making states jump through more hoops," said Dennis Van Roekel, NEA's president, in a statement today. "It's time to turn the page from the one-size-fits-all standardized testing regime and unleash the power of real teaching."

Over at Flypaper, Mike Petrilli **warns** that requiring states to adopt the Common Core State Standards as part of the waiver process could put a federal stamp on the standards and cause a major backlash against them. And over at the Brookings Institute, Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst **questions** whether the administration has the authority to put conditions on the waivers.

Meanwhile, Duncan & Co. continue to tout the need for waivers. Duncan and domestic policy advisor Melody Barnes both appeared at a White House press briefing and then spoke to reporters.

The administration is hoping that every state will apply for the waivers, Barnes and Duncan said on the call. Interestingly, a reporter from Nevada asked Duncan what would happen to states that have plans on the books to implement changes (such as a new educator-evaluation system), but will need some time to put them in place. Could they get credit in the waiver game for promising to act?

Duncan basically said, yes, states could get a gold star for plans-in-progress. "As long as they're moving forward in the right direction we want to support that work," he said.

Photo: Education Secretary Arne Duncan, right, accompanied by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, center, and White House Domestic Policy Council Director Melody Barnes, speaks during his daily news briefing at the White House in Washington on Monday. (Pablo Martinez Monsivais/AP)

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