



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 15, 2011

Obama Admin. to Overhaul Failed “No Child Left Behind”

President Obama has set his sights on yet another endeavor that will continue to perpetuate government overreach: an overhaul of President Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” education policy. According to the President, “The goals of No Child Left Behind were the right goals. Making a promise to educate every child with an excellent teacher—that’s the right thing to do, that’s the right goal.”



President Bush’s [No Child Left Behind Act of 2001](#), which receiving overwhelming bipartisan support, is reform that purports to do the following:

- Set higher standards by establishing measurable goals to improve individual outcomes
- Require states to develop assessments in basic skills in order to receive federal funding
- Not set a national standard, instead allowing individual states to construct their own

As a result of NCLB, Congress has increased federal funding of education from \$42.2 billion in 2001 to \$54.4 billion in 2007. Funding tied specifically to NCLB increased 40 percent, while funding for reading quadrupled.

Unfortunately, as noted by The [John Birch Society](#), not only did NCLB represent a power shift in the education system from state and local to federal control, the act also produced negative results.

According to a 2007 report in the Associated Press, A majority of fourth-and eighth graders are failing to read or do math at basic levels. Additionally, four out of five schools failed to meet NCLB achievement goals since the law had been enacted.

Highlighting what he perceives to be the positive aspects of Bush’s signature NCLB, the President asserts:

Higher standards are right. Accountability is right. Shining a light on the achievement gap between students of difference races and backgrounds, and those with and without disabilities, that’s the right thing to do.

He adds, however:

But what hasn’t worked is denying teachers, schools, and states what they need to meet these goals. That’s why we need to fix No Child Left Behind. We need to make sure we’re graduating students who are ready for college and ready for careers.

How does Obama plan to do that? Throw more money at the problem, of course. The President has announced that he intends to replace standardized tests as a measurement of school performance with a \$350 million plan to help states create new assessments.

History shows that money does not solve the problem. The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act greatly increased federal financial investment in public education, as well as regulatory control.



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Since then, federal education spending has become astronomical, but Andrew Coulson of the Cato Institute [notes](#) that the increased spending has had virtually no impact on improvement:

By calling for a big increase in government education spending, the president is doubling down on a bet that has already been lost, repeatedly, by his predecessors. Love isn't the only thing money can't buy. It can't buy you an improved public education system either. And by extension, higher government education spending won't buy you a better economy.

Obama indicates that he wants to make additional changes as well. According to *CNSNews*:

The President also wants to replace the NCLB's pass-fail school grading system with a system that rewards teachers and principals for improvements. He wants to support governors in adopting more "college-and career-ready" education initiatives. The Obama plan would offer incentives to higher performing teachers to work in underperforming schools, where they are most needed.

The solution to the nation's educational issues is to empower local governments and eliminate the Department of Education, which was established in 1979 under President Jimmy Carter. Mona Charen in *National Review* [assessed](#) this very notion during the 2010 midterm campaign of Nevada Senate-hopeful Sharron Angle, who called for the elimination of the DOE:

The Department of Education was created as a straight political payoff to the teachers unions by Pres. Jimmy Carter (in return for their 1976 endorsement). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, DE's original budget, in 1980, was \$13.1 billion (in 2007 dollars), and it employed 450 people. By 2000, it had increased to \$34.1 billion, and by 2007 it had more than doubled to \$73 billion. The budget request for fiscal 2011 is \$77.8 billion, and the department employs 4,800.

All of this spending has done nothing to improve American education. Between 1973 and 2004, a period in which federal spending on education more than quadrupled, mathematics scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress rose just 1 percent for American 17-year-olds. Between 1971 and 2004, reading scores remained completely flat.

Comparing educational achievement with per-pupil spending among states also calls into question the value of increasing expenditures. While high-spending Massachusetts had the nation's highest proficiency scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, low-spending Idaho did very well, too. South Dakota ranks 42nd in per-pupil expenditures but eighth in math performance and ninth in reading. The District of Columbia, meanwhile, with the nation's highest per-pupil expenditures (\$15,511 in 2007), scores dead last in achievement."

In addition to the vast cost and nonexistent achievement progress that followed the inception of the DOE, the establishment of the DOE has increased bureaucracy and paperwork for teachers. Charen continues:

Busy bureaucrats have created reams of paperwork for teachers and administrators, pushed dubious curricula, such as bilingual education, and adopted manifold extra-educational missions. The department's website lists hundreds of programs that bear little to no relation to schooling, including the Spinal Cord Injuries Model Systems Program, the [SmallBusiness](#) Innovation Research Program, Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights, the Predominantly Black Institutions Program, Life Skills for State and Local Prisoners, Institute for International Public Policy, Grants to States to Improve Management of Drug and Violence Prevention Programs, Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse, and the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program, to



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name just a handful. No one checks. There is no accountability. There are no consequences for failure, except perhaps requests for even greater funding next year.

The Department of Education is a great burbling vat of waste and it is not extremist to say so.

Of course, the notion of eliminating the Department of Education does not fit into the big government fantasy of the current administration. Instead, Obama contends that the government should continue to play a significant role in education and do so by breathing more life into NCLB:

We need to not only hold failing schools accountable, we need to help turn those schools around.

In the 21st century, its not enough to leave no child behind. We need to help every child get ahead.

We need to get every child on a path to academic excellence.

Likewise, Education Secretary Arne Duncan [asserts](#), We have to dramatically improve the quality of education we are providing this country and we can help to continue to reward excellence and encourage at the local level.

Rather than admitting that NCLB has been a colossal failure as 37 percent of Americas schools are failing to meet the requirements of NCLB, and that number is projected to nearly double to 80 percent by the end of 2011 the government continues to beat a dead horse.

Congressional Quarterly notes, Last week, a bipartisan group of lawmakers from both chambers pledged to rewrite federal education law this year, during a meeting at the White House with Obama and Duncan.

Considering the statistical evidence of the failure of federal education policies, constitutionalists are asking: Is it really no child that the government wants to avoid leaving behind, or no federal control?

Photo: President Bush signing the No Child Left Behind Act at Hamilton High School in Hamilton, Ohio.



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