
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “*The Obama Administration’s Education Agenda*”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “The Obama Administration’s Education Agenda.”*

Secretary Duncan, thank you for joining us here today to discuss President Obama’s agenda for transforming education in America.

We are at a unique moment in history.

Americans are facing unprecedented challenges. Workers are losing jobs, schools are facing devastating budget cuts, and families are losing ground.

Fortunately, we have a President who believes that education is a critical component to a lasting economic recovery.

With our economy in flux, he knows we must empower our nation’s schools, colleges and universities to prepare our next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators.

He is committed to building the world-class education system our economy needs and our children deserve.

He put us on the right track by putting Arne Duncan at the helm of our nation’s schools.

Secretary Duncan is the right person, in the right position, at the right time. And he has his work cut out for him.

President Obama and Secretary Duncan have inherited an education system that is failing the needs of our students and our economy.

We face the continuing challenge of closing the achievement gap that begins with our earliest learners.

We used to be a world leader in graduation rates. Now we’ve fallen to 18th out of 24 industrialized nations.

Only 70 percent of our students graduate on time with a regular diploma from high school.

Not enough of our students are getting the support they need to go to college – many can't afford it once they get there.

The status quo isn't working and it isn't sustainable – not if we want to reclaim our leadership in this global economy.

Both President Obama and Secretary Duncan have called education the civil rights issue of our generation.

A good education is a basic civil right.

Education has always held the potential to be the great equalizer in this country.

But it will require bold action to get us there.

Part of what I think is unique about President Obama is he takes a comprehensive approach to education, from cradle to career.

The President believes we have to improve early learning opportunities so our youngest learners can build a good foundation for success.

He believes we can finally achieve the 21st century education system we've been striving for by significantly improving No Child Left Behind, while maintaining the law's core goals and focus on accountability.

He believes we must insist on world-class standards for all students, and ensure that every student has access to an effective, qualified teacher and that those teachers deserve a professional workplace where hard work and success are rewarded.

He wants to improve our accountability system so it is fairer, and better reflects students' learning.

And he wants to regain our competitive footing.

He has called on every American to commit to a year or more of higher education. To help get them there, he wants to expand access to college by increasing the Pell Grant scholarship and other forms of student aid by almost \$100 billion over the next ten years.

This will go a long way toward making sure that all qualified Americans who work hard and want to go to college can achieve this goal.

He's already made a good start toward these goals by investing a historic \$100 billion in education funding as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

This investment not only shows the President is serious about making education a part of our recovery, it also shows that this Administration is serious about driving reforms.

They recognize that this investment gives us an opportunity to lay the groundwork for reforms that will be essential to any larger effort to improve our schools.

In return for these dollars, they asked schools and districts to move the ball down the court in areas that are vital to the success of our children: getting excellent teachers into the neediest classrooms; improving the quality of assessments; and developing data systems that give us timely information on what's happening in our schools.

The plan also gives Secretary Duncan the tools to fuel innovative reforms in schools through his unprecedented Race to the Top Fund. I hope he will set the bar very high in order for states to access these funds.

I am confident Secretary Duncan and President Obama know that to make the change our students need, you have to be willing to break some china.

Today we'll hear more from Secretary Duncan about the Obama administration's education roadmap.

The last time Secretary Duncan appeared before this committee, he was the CEO of Chicago's Public Schools.

His leadership there was impressive.

What set him apart was his ability to work together, with any stakeholder, from any team, to do what's best for students.

That's the most important barometer for success in the tasks before him.

This will require real leadership and political will on all our parts.

Secretary Duncan, I look forward to hearing your testimony, and learning more about how our committee can support your efforts to make college more affordable, expand access to quality early education, improve No Child Left Behind and build a stronger economy that gives all Americans the opportunity to get an excellent – and equal – education.

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