



In Iowa's Interest:

Q & A on the Overhaul of the No Child Left Behind Act and its Impact on Iowa

by Senator Tom Harkin

To compete in the global economy, ensure our long-term prosperity and protect our middle class, I have always believed in the need to provide every Iowa child with a world-class education. Iowa has always been known for great public schools—indeed, high school seniors in our state generally score above national averages. Unfortunately, many Iowa students leave school without the basic skills they need to succeed in college or a career. In 2009, only 79 percent of Iowa 12th graders tested above a basic reading level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and only 71 percent scored basic or higher in math. Moreover, disparities for low-income children, kids with disabilities, and minorities persist.

As Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, I am leading the effort to reauthorize our nation's K-12 education law and fix the problems in the law's most recent iteration – the No Child Left Behind Act. I negotiated a bipartisan bill that passed the HELP Committee late last month. It now moves on to the full Senate for consideration.

Q: How will the legislation impact Iowa?

The bill overhauls the No Child Left Behind Act by eliminating one size fits all policies that create pressure to “teach to the test.” It will allow Iowa to design its own school accountability system and ensure parents and families have access to the information they need about their students. The bill also sets a new, high bar for students to graduate high school ready for college and a career. It will support strong teachers and principals, while giving communities the flexibility they need to address the unique needs of their children.

Q: What are the goals of the legislation?

This long-overdue reauthorization will help ensure that every child has access to a great education that prepares them for success in college and a career in the global economy. It builds on the strengths of current law while getting rid of the policies that have proven ineffective.

Q: Who supports this new measure?

The bill has gained support from numerous groups in Iowa and around the nation such as the Iowa State Education Association, the Iowa Parent-Teacher Association, the Iowa Head Start Association, Save the Children and the Bipartisan Policy Center, among others.

Q: How can Iowans obtain more information on the bill?

Please visit <http://harkin.senate.gov/> or contact any of my local offices.