



COMMISSION ON  
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND  
THE ASPEN INSTITUTE  
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**Contact: Jennifer W. Adams**  
**Phone: 202/736-3858(O) or 202/285-4268(C)**

**Prepared Remarks of Governor Roy E. Barnes  
For the Press Conference on the Introduction  
of the ‘All Students Can Achieve Act’**

Good afternoon. Thank you Senator Lieberman, Senator Landrieu and Senator Coleman for your leadership and for taking such an important step towards improving the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

I am honored to serve as Co-Chair of the bipartisan, independent Commission on No Child Left Behind of the Aspen Institute. The Commission’s charge was to identify the successes, challenges and problems of NCLB and to develop solutions that will improve the law’s impact on raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps. To fulfill its mission, the Commission held public hearings and roundtables across the country and collected written testimony and research from many, including over 10,000 emails.

Our deliberations were grounded in the ideas of the people who are affected by NCLB every day. The process led to a series of specific, actionable recommendations for improving the No Child Left Behind Act that we provided to Congress and the public as a blueprint for reauthorization of the law.

We are very pleased that such a distinguished group of Senators from different political parties has adopted so many of our recommendations and included them in this Act. The Commission also looks forward to working with other Senators and we will continue to follow the lead of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, led by Chairman Kennedy, as it moves through the process of reauthorizing this very important law.

While the *All Students Can Achieve Act* includes many of the Commission’s proposals, I will highlight three areas that the Commission views as critical to ensuring that all children achieve.

***Improving Accountability and Data Systems***

Many of the practitioners and experts that the Commission heard from characterized NCLB’s current Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement as a “blunt instrument” that needed to be refined. There is a clear need for more precise information on student performance that would allow states and districts to give credit to those schools that make significant progress with the students who are the farthest behind.

The Commission is pleased that this Act improves the accuracy and fairness of AYP calculations by allowing states to include achievement growth in such calculations. The bill funds the development and implementation of new state data systems that will track individual student performance over time. States will then be able to use “growth models” to measure student progress for accountability purposes. Measuring individual student data over time is a much more accurate and fair measure of a school’s progress than the current system.

The bill also improves accountability by limiting subgroup sizes. This is critical to ensuring that we don't continue to allow nearly two million children nationally to be "invisible" in state accountability systems.

### ***Measuring Teacher Effectiveness***

The same longitudinal data systems that will allow us to include student achievement growth in AYP calculations will also allow us to measure teacher effectiveness. The *All Students Can Achieve Act* takes the bold and important step of requiring that states use the new longitudinal data to measure teacher effectiveness in the classroom. As all of us know, teacher quality is one of the most important factors in improving student achievement. The difference effective teachers make, especially for disadvantaged children, is well documented in study after study and we see it in district after district across the country.

Senator Lieberman and his colleagues are recommending a sea change in NCLB's teacher quality focus from credentials to effectiveness. Instead of being evaluated only by their requirements for entry into the teaching profession such as certification and licensure, teachers will have the opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers who produce learning gains and receive a positive principal evaluation or peer review will be recognized.

Teachers who do not meet the new "effectiveness" criteria will receive the support and quality professional development they need to succeed.

### ***Setting High American Standards***

Finally, the *All Students Can Achieve Act* takes another bold step by demanding high standards of achievement for all students. It would be a cruel hoax if students, teachers and principals did everything that NCLB asked of them and students still found themselves ill prepared for success after high school. Based on the Commission's analysis of state test results and student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the disheartening performance of American students in international comparisons, and ample testimony at our hearings, it is clear that we simply are not setting expectations for our children at a level that ensures they are ready for college and the work force.

For example, in 2006 in my home state of Georgia, more than 80 percent of students in grades 1 through 8 met or exceeded state standards in reading, and nearly 80 percent met or exceeded state standards in mathematics. However, NAEP results tell a different story. Only 26 percent of Georgia's 4th graders performed at the proficient level or above on NAEP's reading test, while 42 percent scored below the basic level. In mathematics, 30 percent of Georgia's 4th graders performed at the proficient level or above, while 24 percent performed below the basic level. Georgia is far from unique in this regard. In an analysis produced by Achieve, Inc., only 5 to 10 states had less than a 20 percentage point gap between students that were proficient on NAEP and those that were proficient on their state assessments for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and mathematics.

We presently have more than 50 different state standards, with 50 different sets of expectations for what our children should learn, and for how much of this knowledge they must demonstrate to be considered proficient.

The *All Students Can Achieve Act* says "no" to those who want to maintain the status quo and allow some children to be held to lower expectations than others. While it says "yes" to ensuring that all students graduate prepared for college and the workplace by establishing model national standards and allowing states to adopt them. Standards of the states that choose not to adopt the model national standards will be compared to the national standards and the results will be made public.

I often hear members of Congress talk about our competitiveness in the world. There is nothing more critical to ensuring our nation's competitiveness than ensuring that we set high standards for all students. It is the right policy at the right time for our nation.

I commend the Senators here today for introducing the *All Students Can Achieve Act*. While the goals of NCLB are sound, the Commission's work has shown that the statute and its implementation are not perfect, and in many instances need significant improvement. The *All Students Can Achieve Act* takes a significant step towards meeting the original goals of the No Child Left Behind Act. Thank you.

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