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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## Statement by Secretary Tommy Thompson and Governor Roy Barnes in Response to U.S. Senate Hearing on Teacher Quality

Washington, DC—Today former Secretary Tommy Thompson and former Governor Roy Barnes, Co-Chairs of the Commission on No Child Left Behind, made the following statement in response to the U.S. Senate hearing on teacher quality.

Now is the time for Congress to take action to ensure that every child is taught by a highly effective teacher. The Commission on No Child Left Behind applauds the testimonies by the Education Trust and others at today's hearing in the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee that underscored the importance of measuring teacher effectiveness and ensuring that all children—particularly poor and minority children—are taught by highly effective teachers. It's common sense that to achieve, students need to be taught by caring teachers who know their subjects and can teach them well.

Kati Haycock of the Education Trust in her written testimony said, "Given that low-income students are more likely to be assigned to less effective teachers, Congress should be especially focused on using value-added information to ensure these students get their fair share of effective teachers."

The Commission's recommendations outline a clear, actionable plan for ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom. The premise of the Commission's plan is that any strategy to improve teacher effectiveness must hold teachers accountable for high standards of performance, measure progress in a fair, workable system and drive resources and support to teachers who need help. Our comprehensive plan achieves these goals.

Under our plan, effectiveness is measured by principal or peer evaluation as well as improved student test scores. A fair and workable system for measuring effectiveness requires adequate and accurate data systems to be in place before teachers are held accountable for improving student achievement. Finally, teachers who are not effective are provided up to three years of professional development to help them improve and are allowed a total of up to seven years to demonstrate sufficient learning gains to meet the effectiveness standard.

This common-sense, fair plan rewards teachers who are effective and drives support to those who need it most. All teachers benefit.

When teachers are successful, students are successful. Putting the needs of children first means putting an effective teacher in every classroom. We hope Congress will agree.

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### **Myths and Facts about HQET**

The Commission on No Child Left Behind has recommended that states recognize the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom, and support teachers who need and want help to improve. To accomplish this, the Commission recommends that states adopt a definition of a highly qualified and effective teacher (HQET). This definition would allow effective teachers to demonstrate that their children are actually learning even in schools that are not meeting AYP. HQET measures effectiveness by how much progress a teacher's students have made over a year's worth of schooling and by an evaluation from their principal or a group of their peers (fellow teachers).

**Myth:** HQET judges teacher effectiveness based on one test score.

**Fact:** HQET includes both test scores and a principal evaluation or an evaluation by a teacher peer review group. Peer or principal evaluation is given equal weight as test scores in measuring teacher effectiveness.

**Myth:** States don't have the data systems to do this--it will never work.

**Fact:** The Commission's recommendations provide funding for states to develop and implement data systems that will provide accurate information about the effectiveness of teachers. The Commission does not recommend that states implement the new HQET process until those data systems are in place—within 4 years of enactment of a new law – and capable of providing accurate information. The U.S. Department of Education would be required to first sign off on a state's data system prior to it being used in this fashion.

**Myth:** HQET requires that 25% of teachers "fail" each year.

**Fact:** 25% of teachers are not "failures" after one year. Once states implement data systems capable of making the HQET calculations, teachers have seven years to demonstrate that they are producing learning gains and receive a positive evaluation from their principal or fellow teachers before any sanctions apply. During those seven years, when teachers are not making progress they receive additional support and professional development. When a teacher does become HQET, they do not have to go through this process again. This is a system that helps teachers succeed.

**Myth:** HQET requires elementary school teachers to meet its requirements three times.

**Fact:** For calculating the test score element of HQET, elementary school teachers who teach multiple subjects would have their student's scores aggregated to produce one set of learning gains. This would ensure that those teachers don't have to meet three separate requirements.

**Myth:** HQET only labels teachers as failures and does nothing to support and improve teaching.

**Fact:** HQET, for the first time ever in federal law, would guarantee support and professional development to teachers who need it. This support and professional development would be geared toward teachers' individual needs and

strengths. Teachers who need help now can't get it because resources are often spread too thin, or worse, the professional development that is provided does not fit their individual needs. Under HQET, a teacher is entitled to receive the appropriate support and training that they need.

**Myth:** HQET is another way to put down teachers and blame them for all that ails schools.

**Fact:** HQET is a way to get teachers who need more support exactly what they need, and to recognize teachers who are successful. Right now, a very effective teacher is lost in the aggregate of how a school is doing when that school does not make adequate yearly progress (AYP). Now, we'll know where those effective teachers are and recognize them, and schools will be able to target professional development to the teachers who need it most.

**Myth:** HQET judges teachers against an arbitrary federal or state standard and doesn't allow teachers to fairly show their students are learning.

**Fact:** HQET actually compares teachers against their peers and also controls for demographics and other characteristics. Each year of the seven year HQET timeline, the learning gains of a teacher's students are compared to the learning gains of students of other teachers in the state.

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