

A high quality education is vital to the future of every American student. For several years many in our nation believed that more money was the key ingredient to providing a better education. Yet, while the United States has among the highest per-pupil expenditures, our education system is not close to where it needs to be. I believe increased parental involvement and substantial reforms in our education system are essential to bringing about lasting improvements in student performance. These reforms, however, should be initiated by states and local education agencies working together with parents.

At the federal level, Congress has the opportunity in 2012 to make important changes to the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), which governs federal policies impacting our nation's K–12 education system. I agree with the goals set forth in NCLB, namely that every child has the potential to learn and that schools need to be held accountable. I strongly disagree, however, with the level of involvement of the federal government and its one-size-fits-all mandates. States and local communities need the flexibility to develop innovative and targeted solutions that address the unique educational needs of communities. Most importantly, control needs to be in the hands of the people who actually know what is best for children—parents—not bureaucrats in Washington. In school districts with overpopulated and underachieving public schools, I strongly support giving parents the choice and necessary resources to send their children to private, parochial, and charter schools. These alternatives can direct children who were likely to receive an inadequate or otherwise unacceptable education toward excellence.

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