

Senator Roberts Introduces Bill to Block Federal Intrusion on State Education Decisions; Stops Obama Administration from Forcing States to Adopt Common Core

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WASHINGTON, DC – As the U.S. Senate begins debate over elementary and secondary education programs, U.S. Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kans.) today introduced a bill to preserve state education autonomy by prohibiting the federal government from coercing states to adopt education standards like Common Core.

Roberts, a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions will fight to include this legislation in the committee's consideration of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Senator Roberts was joined in introducing the bill by U.S. Senators Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio).

“Setting high standards for our schools, our teachers and our children is the right thing to do, but those standards should be decided in Kansas, without bribes or mandates from Washington,” Senator Roberts said. **“We need to get the federal government out of the classroom, and return community decisions back to where they belong - in the community.”**

Roberts' legislation, the Learning Opportunities Created At the Local (LOCAL) Level Act would strictly forbid the federal government from intervening in a state's education standards, curricula, and assessments through the use of incentives, mandates, grants, waivers or any other form of manipulation. Text of the bill can be found [here](#).

Roberts' efforts to permanently prohibit the Administration's interference with state education decisions through authorization language have been complemented by Senator Grassley's efforts to address the problem through the appropriations process.

“Decisions about what content students should be taught have enormous consequences for children and so should be made as close as possible to the affected parents and students,” Grassley said. **“Federal interference in this area disrupts the direct line of accountability between parents and those making decisions about their children's education. It also takes away needed flexibility from state education leaders to make changes as they learn more about what works and what does not. As I have before, I plan to urge the Appropriations Committee to include language blocking funding for the Administration's overreach in this area. In the meantime, I'll continue to work with Senator Roberts to ensure that the law is amended to stop such overreach permanently.”**

“The best education is the one that is shaped by parents and local leaders who know first-hand the children and communities their standards and goals impact,” Senator Inhofe said. **“This legislation reins in big government regulations being issued by the Department of Education and returns education decisions back to the parents, teachers, and local leaders**

who are on the front lines of advancing our children's future. With more than 660,000 children enrolled in public schools across Oklahoma, it is pivotal we ensure that state and local school boards continue to have the authority needed to carry out education policy decisions."

"Decisions about education curriculum should be made at the local or state level - not from Washington," said Senator Portman. "Having a one-size-fits-all Washington approach to education is harmful to our children and to our education system. We should allow states and local communities the flexibility to innovate and make their own education decisions. The federal government does have a key supporting role to play in improving our workforce, and I have led efforts to streamline and improve our worker retraining programs while giving states additional flexibility."

Senator Roberts' bill also has the support of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). **"We are proud to support Senator Roberts' Learning Opportunities Created at Local Level Act,"** said Mike Smith, President of the HSLDA. **"This legislation will significantly reduce the federal government's ability to dictate education decisions to states, will prohibit the federal government from forcing states to adopt the Common Core, and will begin to return educational decisions to local and state control."**

Designed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2007, Common Core was an effort to set math and reading standards for students across the country. States could adopt Common Core voluntarily.

In defiance of federal law, the Obama Administration began coercing states to implement Common Core. They required states to adopt Common Core standards to receive federal funding under the Obama administration's multibillion-dollar Race to the Top (RTT) program and used federal funds to develop Common Core-aligned tests.

"Unfortunately, it is evident that certain waivers from onerous education requirements have been granted only to those states that agree to implement the White House's preferred education policies," Roberts said. **"In fact, The New York Times has referred to the waiver process as 'the most sweeping use of executive authority to rewrite federal education law since Washington expanded its involvement in education in the 1960s.' My bill ensures States retain their authority to determine the curriculum and standards that are best for their students."**

Believing that local control of education is the best control Senator Roberts introduced the LOCAL Level Act in 2014 in the previous Congress. Senator Roberts is also an outspoken opponent of the RTT grant program, a main vehicle the Obama Administration uses to force states to adopt Common Core. In addition, in June of 2013, during the Senate HELP Committee's consideration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Senator Roberts introduced an amendment to prohibit the U.S. Secretary of Education from offering waivers containing mandates in exchange for relief from onerous provisions of ESEA.