

Press Release

for immediate release

U.S. Senate ushers in new era in public education with historic vote

Kansas NEA welcomes bill to create greater opportunity for every student to succeed

Topeka, Kansas— On Tuesday, December 8, 2015 the U.S. Senate approved S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a bipartisan and bicameral bill to reauthorize the federal education law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. President Barack Obama is expected to sign the bill into law as soon as this week.

KNEA President Mark Farr said, “The dedicated professionals working in Kansas public schools continue to push for what’s best for all students. Parents and teachers want equal opportunity for all of our students to succeed, this federal legislation gives us a foundation to provide that opportunity.”

Students and educators have lived with the unintended consequences of the failed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for more than 14 years. Kansas NEA members have waged an unprecedented mobilization and advocacy campaign on behalf of the Kansas’s students in an effort to turn the page on the failed NCLB law and to bring in a new federal education law that provides more opportunity for all students.

This legislation begins to close the opportunity gaps for students by providing a new system that includes an ‘opportunity dashboard’ with indicators of school success and student support. Not only does it reduce the amount of standardized testing in schools, but it decouples high-stakes decisions and statewide testing so students have more time to develop critical thinking while educators do what they love — inspire a lifelong love of learning.

The extraordinary effort of NEA members nationwide to get Congress to rewrite NCLB resulted in an unprecedented [bipartisan and bicameral](#) compromise and eventual bill language in late November. The bill sailed through the U.S. House with a vote of 359 in favor to 64 against.

Leading up to ESSA’s passage, educators mobilized in Kansas and across the nation, using face-to-face meetings with lawmakers, phone calls, petitions, emails and social media to urge Congress to bring the joy of teaching and learning back to the classroom and help close opportunity and resource gaps so that all students have access to a well-rounded education. Educators nationwide made nearly a half million individual contacts to members of Congress. Utilizing its statewide education advocacy messaging platform (at www.joinusks.org), nearly 1,000 citizens and members of KNEA were urged to push for the passage of ESSA on behalf of Kansas’s students.

“The U.S. Senate took a bold and historic step to usher in a new era in public education,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “This is a deserved victory for public education because the Every Student Succeeds Act will ensure all students have equal opportunity to a high-quality public education regardless of ZIP Code.”

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