



**Massachusetts Association
of School Committees**

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Massachusetts Association of School Committees Position Paper

Non-Budgetary Priorities

Thanks to the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation

Once again, public education can boast no better friends than the members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation. It is second to none in its commitment to public schools, high standards, reasonable linkage between mandates and regulation, and a keen sense of how to put its values into action.

Moreover, over the past five years, the support of our congressional delegation has been critical to achieve three major public policy priorities supported by MASC:

- Defeating proposals to cripple the Perkins Act. As a result, our vocational technical high schools will continue to receive federal financial support for important initiatives and support from a discrete line item in the budget.
- Attempting to make improvements to the poorly crafted “No Child Left Behind Act,” a voluminous piece of legislation that, particularly as implemented in Massachusetts, has undermined efforts of local educators.
- Opposing the privatization of Social Security and articulating so forcefully the arguments in favor of the program for retiree benefits, protection for disabled workers and surviving spouses, and preservation of benefits for dependent children – most of whom are public school students at economic and social risk. Massachusetts lawmakers were among those most articulating the need to resist tampering with Social Security and or to promote privatization alternatives.

In addition, Congress is acting to bring access to health care to most Americans through a system of insurance and health and medical service reforms. Children at risk cannot learn if they and their families are at risk for undiagnosed and untreated vision, dental, hearing, general and mental health problems. We applaud the members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation for working tirelessly to insure every child and adult in 2009 and 2010.

MASC recognizes that the Congress confronts a serious federal budget crisis. The combination of tax cuts, military and defense appropriations, and demands for public safety and social services have created an unprecedented federal deficit without the resources to resolve all the critical issues in a short time frame.

The options available are limited by the realities for the budget and the political alignment that runs contrary to what we believe is a forward looking agenda for public schools.

Accordingly, we have provided a Position Paper to identify several strategies that do not involve the budget. We believe that there are some important steps that Congress can take that have no cost implications and which may, if approved, ameliorate the hostile regulatory climate for education. and replace it with a system of incentives and support.

1. No Child Left Behind – Securing Important

Administrative and Regulatory Changes to the law. The regulatory burden for schools under the law, coupled with already significant state regulation make NCLB problematic. Even if the law were not over \$90 billion underfunded, the administrative burden is crushing. We have included in an informational packet recommendations from the National School Boards Association that will identify some of the cumbersome, counterintuitive, and overwhelming regulatory requirements of the law that serve no real educational purpose. We have developed a separate position paper related to NCLB.

2. Perkins Act - Protect Vocational Technical High

Schools by Opposing Amu Effort to Incorporate Perkins Act Funding Into Block Grants.

We commend to you more detailed recommendations dealing with a range of federal legislative proposals developed in collaboration with the National School Boards Association.

3. Establish Prerequisites for Promulgation of Federal Regulations Related to Education

We believe that the equivalent of a “Paperwork Reduction Act” should be enacted to measure the dollar and time costs of compliance with federal education regulations before such regulations may be promulgated. It

was recently disclosed that simply responding to the Race to the Top application at the state level requires about 650 person hours. Local applications for school districts to collaborate in planning for federal RTTT funds will take hundreds of person-hours. In Massachusetts, it is estimated that every educator in a public school system diverts on average 160 person hours per year to comply with federal and state regulatory requirements.

If our schools are to educate children, we see little value in spending dozens of hours in regulatory compliance that do not affect or relate to the delivery of services directly to children or in supporting the teacher specialists, counselors, therapists, other professionals and administrative personnel who assist classroom teachers in their work.

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