



## Republican Women's Federation of Michigan

Established 1925

Sandra Kahn, President  
4520 Midland Road  
Saginaw, MI 48603  
(989) 790-0285  
sandrakahn@charter.net

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Dear Michigan Congressmen:

I was recently emailed a letter from my congressman proudly announcing his vote in favor of renewing ESEA, (now ESSA). You may have received a similar email.

With the expiration of NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act), congress was given the opportunity to end the rapidly increasing control of education by our federal government. Sadly (again) it has failed in its duty to protect America's citizens from the power of a highly politicized, special interest serving federal government. National Education, like National Religion and Nationalized Healthcare has no place in the U.S. Constitutional Republic.

ESSA (Every Student Achieves Act) is "not a step in the right direction" as your congressman would like you to believe. It is a step in the wrong direction. The mechanism for government control of education was not removed from this bill. In fact, it has expanded federal over-reach by its prescriptions for pre-school children: Race to the Top has been replaced by Race for the Tots. Government, it seems, cannot get its hands on our children early enough.

Like NCLB, ESSA contains no enforcement mechanism for its purported prohibition against federal interference with States. The "carrot and stick" shenanigans used to force objectionable, untested ELA and Math (soon to be Next Generation Science and Social Studies) Standards that placed CCSS (Common Core State Standards) into the nation's schools remains. ESSA, in fact, expands NCLB prescriptions by its specificity of non-cognitive (sociological/psychological) data. I am disappointed that our elected representatives are comfortable with this Orwellian law.

The 2009 Race to the Top initiative (the carrot) and Arne Duncan's unconstitutional (ab)use of the NCLB waiver (the stick) clearly demonstrated the federal over-reach inherent in EASA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965). ESSA's claims to limit federal overreach are purely cosmetic.

While we are accustomed to a Statists' naïve belief in the palliative power of federal control, Michigan voters elected a Republican congressional majority based on their promise of a less intrusive, limited government. They are now writing their constituents with identical "talking points" in hopes that that a lie, told brazenly and often, will be accepted as true.

My congressman told me ESSA "gets rid of Common Core". It does nothing of the sort. ESSA retains federal "rights of final approval" over state standards and assessments, it reinforces a 95% student test participation rate (effectively nullifying parent opt-out rights), it mandates federal approved assessments, and it retains and extends the NCLB test regimen (effectively crowding out State and District assessments). ESSA's specificity increases federal control by requiring coordination with 11 federal statutes in place of NCLB's 6. It places pre-K under the demonstrably failed Headstart legislation and requires that children with learning disabilities be evaluated under the same standards used for the non-learning disabled.

When our elected Representatives demonstrate that they are capable of managing the business of government, I might be willing to let them manage the business of educating our children. Until that happens, I prefer to place my trust in parents and educators.

Michigan schools have been seriously harmed, administratively and financially, over the past five years by the chaos of State/Federal Mandates and regulations. As long as the federal government retains power over testing, oversight, compliance and the “purse” your child’s school remains subject to the whims of the U.S. Department of Education.

ESSA, like most of Washington’s power grabbing bills is over one thousand pages long, contradicts itself and is virtually unreadable. I suppose they hope we won’t read them. And yet we do. (Do they?)

Many of the Michigan congressmen that we worked to elect in 2014 are new to Washington. In the future, I hope they do a better job of protecting Michigan citizens from Washington’s micro-management. At the very least, I would like them to stop trying to deceive us.

Sincerely,

Sandra Kahn, President  
Republican Women’s Federation of Michigan