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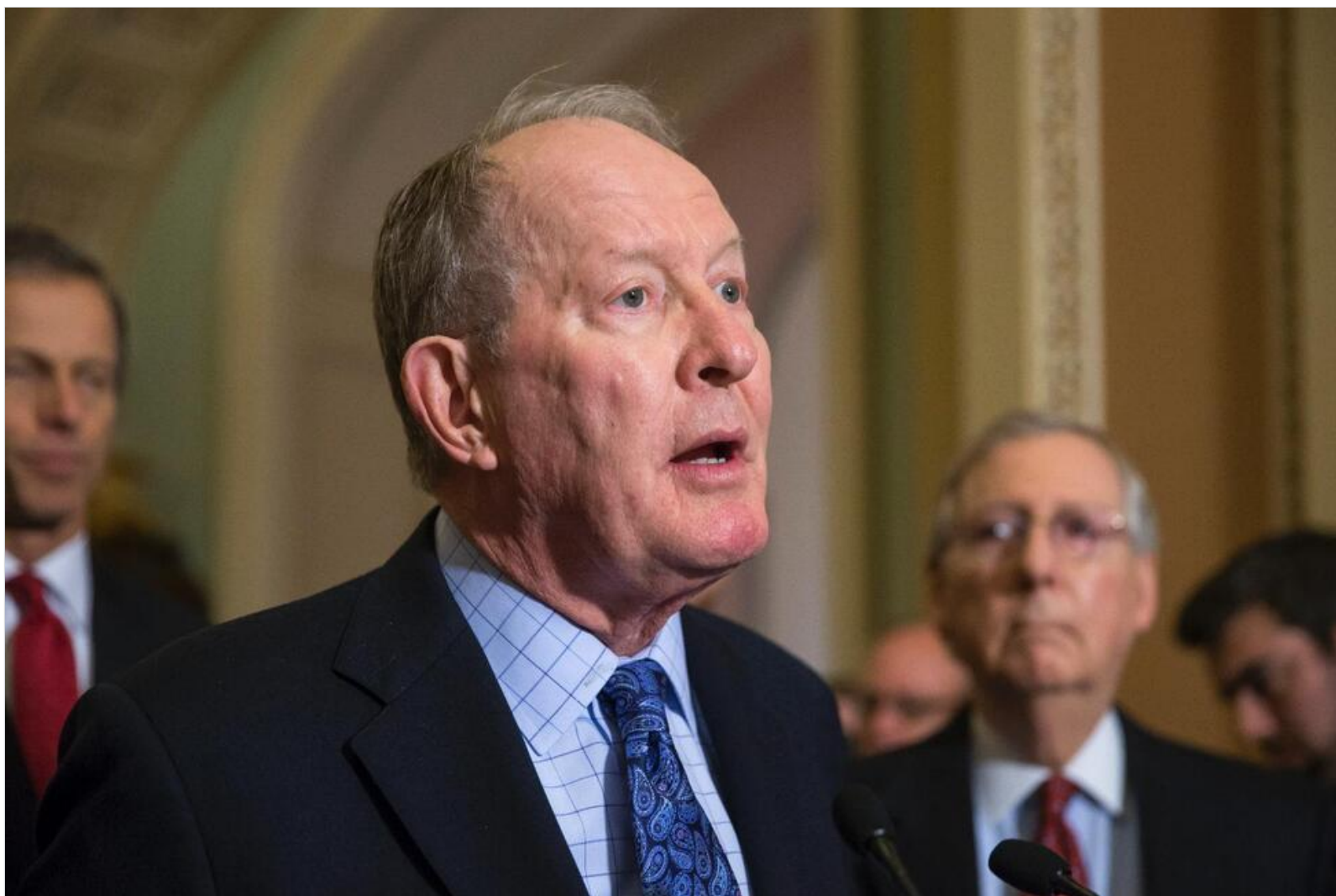
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No Child Left Behind Has Finally Been Left Behind

In passing the Every Student Succeeds Act, Congress shrinks the role of the federal government in education.

By [Lauren Camera](#) | Dec. 9, 2015

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Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., speaks to reporters after the Senate voted overwhelmingly to end debate on the makeover of the widely criticized No Child Left Behind Act, setting up a final vote Wednesday.  THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The U.S. Senate on Wednesday passed a replacement for the federal K-12 law known as No Child Left Behind, a move made with overwhelming bipartisan support that stands to significantly shrink the footprint of the federal government in education and hand over much of the decision-making power to states and school districts.

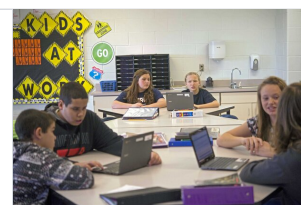
The Senate passage, by a 85-12 vote, was the final hurdle in getting the long overdue reauthorization to the president's desk. The [House passed the measure](#) last week with similar bipartisan support, 359-64, and President Barack Obama is set to sign the bill into law as early as this week.



Education Department Recommends Less Testing

Students shouldn't spend more than 2 percent of time taking tests, the Education Department says.

Lauren Camera Oct. 24, 2015

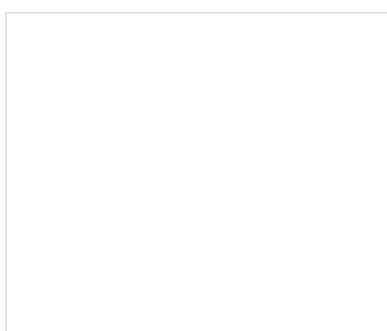


The new measure, the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#), will eliminate an accountability system that punished states if not enough students were proficient in reading and math – a pillar of the old law that has been largely blamed for creating a culture of [overtesting](#).

Instead, states will create their own accountability systems as well as their own teacher evaluation systems, and will decide for themselves how to fix failing schools and close achievement gaps.

"Whereas No Child Left Behind prescribed a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to struggling schools, this law offers the flexibility to find the best local solutions – while also ensuring that students are making progress," Education Secretary Arne Duncan said Tuesday morning at an event in Washington.

The new measure maintains a handful of provisions from No Child Left Behind. Most notably, it preserves the federal testing schedule, which requires states to test students annually in grades three through eight in reading and math, and once in high school in each subject. It also continues the requirement that schools annually report the achievement scores of students and break down that data by race, economic status, disability and English-learner status.



The law also includes new safeguards to ensure states keep tabs on their most underserved students. Without that language, Democratic Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey had threatened to [filibuster](#) the bill, and Duncan said the president would not sign it.

Those guardrails include requirements that states identify their worst 5 percent of schools, schools where more than two-thirds of students aren't graduating and schools that are failing to close achievement gaps between subgroups of students.

Though the much-maligned No Child Left Behind has been overdue for an update since it expired in 2007, the transfer of power from the federal government to states is widely said to be a direct response to the Obama administration's use of executive authority to enact change in the education sphere. Most notably, critics have highlighted the administration's Race to the Top competition – which dangled dollars in front of states in exchange for them adopting a slate of difficult education policy changes – and conditional waivers, which once granted relieved states from the most burdensome parts of No Child Left Behind but asked them to adopt similarly challenging policies.

"This consensus will end the waivers through which the U.S. Department of Education has become in effect a national school board," said Sen. Lamar Alexander, the Tennessee Republican and chairman of the Senate education committee who co-authored the new legislation. "Governors have been forced to come to Washington, D.C., and play Mother May I."

Arne Duncan Assesses His Legacy

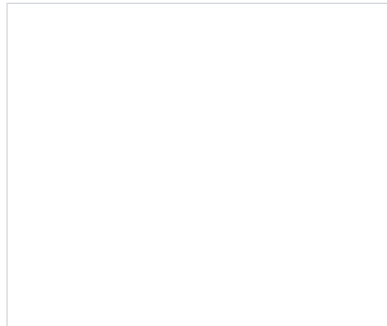
High school graduation rates are up and drop-out rates are down.

Lauren Camera Nov. 12, 2015



Duncan pushed back on that sentiment.

"I want to be clear about why that fundamentally misses the point," he said. "For me, and for my colleagues at the department, our role has never for one minute been about our authority, or taking power from local leaders. It's always been about what was expected of our kids, what quality of education we'd offer them and whether there would be change if they weren't making progress."



The evolution of the Every Student Succeeds Act is a rare example of bipartisan legislating in a Congress often divided along party lines. It also garnered the support of a diverse group of education stakeholders, including the two national teachers unions, education reform groups, state school system chiefs, district superintendents, parent organizations and the civil rights community. In addition, the law is the first piece of legislation the National Governors Association supported in nearly 20 years.

"It's not the bill I would have written on my own," said Sen. Patty Murray, the Washington Democrat and ranking minority-party member of the education committee who brokered the bill with Alexander and the pair's counterparts in the House. "I know it's not the bill Republicans would have written on their own. That kind of bipartisanship is what we need more of in Congress."

Tags: No Child Left Behind, Arne Duncan, Lamar Alexander, Patty Murray, education policy, K-12 education, Every Student Succeeds Act

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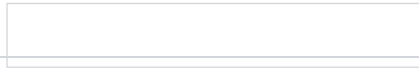
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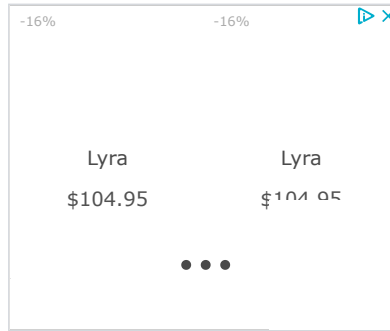
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