



Principal's Policy Blog

The Latest in Federal Policy That Affects Your School



Second ESEA Bill to Focus on Charter Schools

As part of the House Education and the Workforce Committee's effort to consider a piecemeal approach to reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), new legislation was introduced last week to expand the federal Charter Schools Program.

According to the committee's bill summary, the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act (H.R. 2218) would allow state educational agencies, state charter school boards, or governors to continue to award subgrants for the creation of new charter schools in addition to the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools.

In order to receive funds under the program, grantees would have to describe how they will work with charter schools to instruct all prospective students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, and provide technical assistance to ensure proper monitoring of charter schools. Funding would be prioritized for those states that: 1) agree to repeal caps on the number of charter schools permitted in the state; 2) allow entities other than state educational agencies or local educational agencies to be charter school authorizers; 3) provide financing to charter schools that is comparable to traditional public schools, 4) support full-blended or hybrid-online charter school models; and 5) use charter schools to help improve struggling schools.

"An estimated 420,000 students in the U.S. are on charter school waitlists, desperate to escape underperforming public schools," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), in a press release. "It's time we enhance school choice by improving access to charter schools. These innovative institutions empower parents to play a more active role in their children's education, open doors for teachers to pioneer fresh teaching methods, and promote high academic standards. By facilitating the development and expansion of successful charter schools, H.R. 2218 will provide parents and children more opportunities for a better education."

The House Education and the Workforce Committee is scheduled to mark up the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act on June 22, and the full House could consider the bill before the July 4 recess. According to press reports, future ESEA legislation will address local control and flexibility, teachers and school leaders, and accountability.