

RNC, senator voice opposition to Common Core

The [Common Core State Standards](#) initiative recently received more pushback, this time from the [Republican National Committee](#) and a Republican senator, who see the content standards as overreach by the federal government and call for the restoration of state-level education decisions.

The moves come as state legislators have introduced bills that would prevent implementing the standards in several Common Core states, including Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, and South Carolina.

At its meeting the weekend of April 13-14, the RNC approved resolutions against the Common Core, calling it "an inappropriate overreach to standardize and control the education of our children so they will conform to a preconceived 'normal,'" and resolved that it rejects the CCSS plan which creates a "nationwide straightjacket on academic freedom and achievement."

The move has perplexed some supporters of the state-designed initiative.

"The irony is folks at the federal level would send a message that they don't like state-led initiatives, which is what Common Core was," said Bob Wise, president of the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) and former governor of West Virginia.

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have adopted Common Core standards for English/language arts and mathematics, and in many states, districts and schools have begun implementation. Many states originally adopted the Common Core to compete for federal [Race to the Top](#) funds, which required states to adopt college- and career-ready standards.

The use of 2009 stimulus money to reward states committed to the Common Core goes against the federal law prohibiting a federalized curriculum, the RNC said in its resolution. But Wise noted that several states signed on to the Common Core and did not apply for RTTT funds.

The Common Core originated from the [National Governor's Association](#) and the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#) as a way to ensure students are prepared for college and careers and to compete in the global marketplace.

The RNC said the two groups received "tens of millions of dollars from private third parties to advocate for and develop the CCSS strategy, subsequently created the CCSS through a process that was not subject to any freedom of information acts or other sunshine laws," and states, their legislatures and their citizens did not have time to evaluate the standards before committing to them.

"I don't know anything more conservative than states coming together, adopting standards, and having to go back to their states and each voluntarily" adopting the standards, Wise said. The RNC resolution attacked a state-led initiative for standards-based reform that originated as an effort from many prominent Republican governors, he added.

The key issue for many Republicans is student privacy and data, said Maria Ferguson, executive director for the [Center on Education Policy](#) at [George Washington University](#) .

In its resolution, the RNC rejected the "collection of personal student data for any non-educational purpose without the prior written consent of an adult student or a child student's parent" and it rejected sharing such data without prior consent with any entity other than schools or education agencies within the state.

Grassley's letter

Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, has taken a stance similar to the RNC's.

In a draft letter to [Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee](#) Chairman Tom Harkin D-Iowa, who also chairs the [Appropriations Committee's](#) Labor, HHS, and Education panel, as well as that subcommittee's ranking member, Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., Grassley asks the subcommittee to "eliminate further interference by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) with respect to state decisions on academic content standards" by not appropriating FY 2014 funds for activities related to multi-state specified standards, including the Common Core.

Although billed as a voluntary effort, Grassley said in the draft letter, college- and career-ready standards are a selection criterion for RTTT as well as a condition for states to receive ESEA flexibility waivers, therefore it "violates the structure of our education system."

However, Wise said not every state adopted Common Core for RTTT or ESEA waivers. For example, Virginia adopted its own set of college- and career-ready standards, not the Common Core, and received an ESEA waiver.

Grassley is inviting senators to sign the letter by April 25 before submitting it on April 26.

Ferguson believes many people are "waking up to the idea" of the CCSS and they understand students face a competitive world.

"The reality is for all these states that have chosen to adopt the Common Core, they've been working hard in the past years to put things in place," Ferguson said. "In a time where budget dollars are really tight, I don't think it's as simple as 'Let's not do the Common Core because so much has been invested in this enterprise.'"

"Like everything else in education, it's a bit of a PR campaign," she said.

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April 19, 2013

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