



Making Schools Work Better for all Children

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* **CHARTERS:** Indiana lawmakers delivered a strong charter school law to its citizens last week, culminating the end of a seven-year effort led primarily by State Senator Teresa Lubbers, of Indianapolis and a coalition of leading businesses, foundations and citizens. The legislation is expected to be signed into law by Governor Frank O'Bannon soon.

Key provisions of the law include allowing sponsorship by state universities statewide and the Mayor of Indianapolis, allowing for the legal autonomy start-up charters need in terms of hiring, district rules and union contracts, and allowing for an unlimited number of charter schools to open in the state.

Showing that the trend is likely to continue in favor of charter schools, amendments to strengthen charter school laws are pending in Minnesota, Missouri, Connecticut, Florida, Nevada, Illinois and Alaska. In Iowa, for the first time, charter school legislation is currently moving through the legislature. For more on charter schools, [click here](#).

* **PAIGE TO KEYNOTE:** Secretary of Education Rod Paige will keynote the federal luncheon hosted tomorrow by the Education Leaders Council. Focusing on "Ensuring No Child is Left Behind - Transforming the Federal Role in Education," the event marks the first time a Secretary of Education has addressed a forum hosted by the ELC, which represents some 30 percent of K-12 students in America. Also addressing the group will be Rep. John Boehner, Chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee and Rep. Mike Castle, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Education Reform. The luncheon is set for 11:00 am in Room 2261 of the Rayburn House Office Building. To learn more about the Education Leaders Council, go to www.educationleaders.org.

* **FEDERAL POLICY:** The battle is joined. The U.S. Senate is set to take up President Bush's education reform package tomorrow, and teachers unions are throwing their weight behind efforts to insist on a \$13.9 billion education increase, even before new accountability programs have been put into place. The split reiterates the old dichotomy between "follow the money" and "follow the results," with reformers insisting on results. Fights also threaten to break out over a negotiated agreement between Republicans and Democrats over proposals allowing parents to use federal funds for extra tutoring for children in repeatedly failing schools, and over the creation of block grants to replace programs bound by government red tape.

* **TESTING:** The Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) has resumed its \$1.4 million campaign against the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam, with a television ad that

will run through May at a cost of \$450,000. The ads again declare the MCAS to be a "flawed and unfair test." But Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) has stood up for the MCAS, recently noting "We have to have tests that take time to develop and are real quality tests and then have curriculum in place. It takes time. That is what has been developed with MCAS. They are quality tests."

***NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS WEEK:** Congressional resolutions supporting National Charter Schools Week will be introduced soon on Capitol Hill, and a "Salute to Charter Schools Week" sponsored by The Center for Education Reform will include tours of charter schools in Washington, DC, and a Capitol Hill showing of the award-winning PBS special "Charter Schools That Work." CER is also distributing bumper stickers boosting charter schools and National Charter Schools Week throughout the country.



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