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Education

Fred Thompson believes that every child in America deserves a quality education, and that every parent should determine how that is best accomplished. Despite the tens of billions of dollars spent on education by Washington each year, and the hundreds of federal education programs now in place, our children are still falling behind, particularly in subjects crucial to success in the global economy in which we live. Given the importance of education to our nation's security, prosperity, and unity, we should all be alarmed and committed to solving this problem.

At a time when America is behind other developed countries in education excellence, the federal role in education is too intrusive and too bureaucratic, and has become part of the problem. No Child Left Behind was a good start -- the testing component, in particular, was a necessary measure. The associated federal mandates, however, have put significant administrative burdens on teachers and caused many States to *lower* testing standards.

State and local governments are closest to the parents, the kids, and the schools. They are best situated to implement changes and innovations that result in better educated children. A new, simplified, federal education block grant program with objective testing standards would bring us closer to reaching the shared goal of improving our schools, while preserving local control. We must begin by returning to our core principles of more parental control and choice, higher standards, and greater accountability as described below:

Empowering Parents, Teachers, and Local School Boards

- Give parents the ability to choose the best setting situation to meet the needs of their children--whether in a public, private, religious, home or charter school setting.
- Empower parents and provide choices through vouchers and tax credits.
- Help educators and school boards by removing federal bureaucratic red-tape and paperwork.

Promoting Higher Standards for Academic Excellence

- Give states greater flexibility to better measure individual student progress by encouraging the development of individualized state education plans.
- Remove federal mandates that penalize states for adhering to higher academic standards.

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- Condition education funding on states setting objective, measurable test standards.
- Encourage students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

Ensuring Accountability within America's Education System

- Measure individual student progress and provide assistance to those who need it.
- Challenge America's children to succeed in the competitive global economy by offering advanced course-work and more focused educational opportunities.
- Incentivize teachers who help close the achievement gap by rewarding them for serving in the most challenging schools.
- Promote transparency to assess academic performance and share innovations in education.

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