

Senate Passes Every Student Succeeds Act, 85-12

Wednesday, the U.S. Senate voted 85-12 to adopt a rewrite of No Child Left Behind, in what has been billed as a “major rollback” of federal authority over K-12 education.

The bill, S. 1177—“The Every Student Succeeds Act”—does retain some aspects of the unpopular NCLB law. It also had the full endorsement of the National Education Association, the largest teacher’s union in the U.S.

“We applaud the bipartisan leadership undertaken to shepherd the bill through both chambers and conference committee. For 14 long years, students and educators have lived under the deeply flawed No Child Left Behind,” NEA president Lily Eskelsen Garcia said prior to the vote. “S. 1177 ends the failed one-size-fits-all approach of recent years and instead empowers local educators, parents and communities to collaboratively make education decisions as well as continuing to require that states and districts address students most in need.”

The NEA sent a letter to every member of Congress, expressing its support for ESSA. The letter included the thinly veiled threat that votes associated with the proposed legislation would be on the organization’s congressional report card.

ESSA had its detractors, as well, mainly among the opponents of Common Core whose concerns were supposed to be addressed by the bill. Truth in American Education released a report contemporaneously to NEA’s letter, which outlines many of the concerns over the landmark education legislation.

“[T]he bill is written with language that appears to empower worthy goals such as closing student achievement gaps and preparing students for college and careers, eliminating common

core and reigning in the U.S. Secretary of Education,” the report states. “[B]ut the reality is, the bill expands federal control over state standards, affirms cronyism camouflaged as public/private-partnership, and makes state departments of education the enforcers of federal education policies that are detrimental to students, parent rights, local control and the teaching profession.”

The House of Representatives adopted the bill last week. It’s now headed to President Obama, who has pledged to sign it into law.