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## Obama Administration Proceeds with Reform of No Child Left Behind Following Congressional Inaction

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Contact: Press Office, (202) 401-1576, [press@ed.gov](mailto:press@ed.gov) (<mailto:press@ed.gov>)

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With the new school year fast approaching and still no bill to reform the federal education law known as No Child Left Behind, the Obama administration will provide a process for states to seek relief from key provisions of the law, provided that they are willing to embrace education reform.

Melody Barnes, director of the Domestic Policy Council at the White House, and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan will jointly announce the President's directive in the White House briefing room on Monday, Aug. 8. Barnes will explain that the administration's proposal to fix NCLB has been with Congress for 16 months, been the topic of numerous meetings and hearings, and been subjected to partisan politics in the House. Last March—a full year after submitting his proposal—the President called for a bill before the start of the school year.

"America's future competitiveness is being decided today, in classrooms across the nation. With no clear path to a bipartisan bill in Congress, the President has directed us to move forward with an administrative process to provide flexibility within the law for states and districts that are willing to embrace reform," Barnes said.

She will emphasize that such a process is "not a pass on accountability. There will be a high bar for states seeking flexibility within the law. We'll encourage all states to apply and each one should have a chance to succeed. But those that don't will have to comply with No Child Left Behind's requirements, until Congress enacts a law that will deliver change to all 50 states."

The administration's proposal for fixing NCLB calls for college- and career-ready standards, more great teachers and principals, robust use of data, and a more flexible and targeted accountability system based on measuring annual student growth. Barnes and Duncan will note that the final details on the ESEA flexibility package will reflect similar goals. The specifics of the package will be made public in September.

Duncan will remark that NCLB is "forcing districts into one-size-fits-all solutions that just don't work. The President understands this and he has directed us to move ahead in providing relief—but only for states and districts that are prepared to address our educational challenges."

"There is no magic bullet for fixing education and the best ideas will always come from the local level—from the hardworking men and women in our schools doing the hard work every day to educate our children," Duncan said. "We're still hopeful that Congress can continue its work this fall. In the meantime, states and districts have an opportunity to move forward."

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