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**Association of Educational Service Agencies**

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## **2016 General Election Results and What They Might Mean for K-12 Education**

*Outlined below are the results of the 2016 General Election and the impact the results may have on the federal education policy issues. AESAs will be drafting a new federal advocacy agenda at the Federal Advocacy Committee meeting in February. It is critical that we receive input on federal issues in the upcoming weeks and months ahead. More information will be forthcoming in future AESAs Online News.*

### **President**

President-Elect Donald Trump defeated Secretary of State Hillary Clinton 279 electoral votes to 228. Candidates needed to achieve 270 electoral votes to secure the presidency. Despite not achieving the requisite electoral votes and losing the election, it does appear that Clinton narrowly won the popular vote.

What could Donald Trump's win mean for primary and secondary education? It is hard to say because it has not been a centerpiece of his campaign policy agenda. The election of Donald Trump does raise big questions about federal policies and their potential impacts on K-12 education.

During his acceptance speech, President-Elect Trump made a vague reference to education. He pledged to bring his business experience to government and vowed "to fix our inner cities and rebuild our highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, schools, hospitals." It is yet to be seen whether he views education as a critical element to the nation's economic security and vitality.

Since entering the race, even before the primaries began, Donald Trump offered few details about his views on education policy. That being said, both he and his team have reiterated some longstanding conservative talking points:

- Encouraging school choice using federal block grants;
- Protecting children from cyberbullying on social media;
- Addressing child care affordability;
- Eliminating the Common Core; and
- Dismantling the U.S. Department of Education.

Many of Trump's education proposals have been vague and, at times, contradictory. Some, like eliminating Common Core, are education policy issues that are better left to the states and clearly outside the bounds of what a president can actually do. This is where the distinct difference between campaign promises and governing becomes clear.

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Like other Republican presidential candidates, Donald Trump has said he would dismantle the Department of Education; or, at least "downsize" the department to an entity that just allocates funding. For example, some in his campaign have said there's no need to keep the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) which oversees Title IX enforcement. (It has become increasingly active over the last eight (8) years in shining a spotlight on campus sexual assaults.) Eliminating OCR would not only be controversial but is likely a politically untenable position. It is also important to note that eliminating the Department of Education would likely take an act of Congress.

What might Donald's Trump's education department look like? Trump has offered a few hints about who he might pick to lead the department including:

- Ben Carson, a retired neurosurgeon who ran against Trump in the primary;
- Gerard Robinson, a fellow at the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute, who has been working on education issues for Trump's transition team;
- Carl Paladino, a Trump surrogate and a businessman who previously challenged New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and sits on the local school board in Buffalo, N.Y.; and
- New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, who is leading Trump's transition team.

One thing is certain, however. Whomever is selected as the next Secretary must deal with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and how it affects public schools across the country. The Obama administration's strong ESSA regulations, viewed by many as No Child Left Behind 2.0, have drawn the ire of many Republicans and some Democrats in Congress, along with state and local education officials, teachers' unions and others. The Trump administration could seek to upend or change much of the regulatory work to date. This, of course, remains to be seen.

## U.S. Congress

Republicans maintained control of the U.S. House and Senate as outlined below. Though they control the Senate, the Republicans do not have 60 votes, which is essential to accomplishing the important policy-related work and passage of legislation in the Senate. This will make it more complicated for President-elect Trump to work with the Senate despite having a majority of his own party in control.

U.S. Senate – Incumbent Republican Rob Portman defeated former Democrat Congressman and Governor Ted Strickland

The U.S. Senate remained in Republican Control 51 – 46, with 2 independents and 1 election not called. So far, this is a net pick up of 2 Democrat seats.

U.S. House - Republicans have a 238-193 majority with 4 contests still undecided. At this time, that is a gain of 6 seats for Democrats and a loss of 6 seats for Republicans.

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Perhaps it is ironic to note that in a presidential election that is characterized as one in which the voters spoke out against a dysfunctional Congress and “corrupt system,” the voters left Congress largely unchanged. This is despite a 14.9% average approval rating in the months leading up to the election.

So how does this effect the education debate in Congress? The following, according to Politico, provides some good insights:

“Status quo for Senate education committee: Republicans maintained their control of the Senate last night - which means Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) will most likely continue as chair of the Senate HELP Committee. Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), who cruised to re-election last night, is likely to remain as the top Democrat on the panel. The composition of the Senate panel, however, will change to some extent as a result of last night's elections: Sen. Mark Kirk (R- Ill.) lost his seat to Rep. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.).”

“New leadership on House education committee: Republicans fended off Democratic challenges last night to hold on to the House - and that means there will be a new Republican chair of the House education committee. Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.) is the frontrunner to replace the retiring chairman Rep. John Kline (R-Minn.). On the Democratic side of the committee, things will likely stay the same, as Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) returns as the top Democrat on the panel.”

## Conclusion

More will become clear in the coming weeks as to what the next General Assembly and Congressional Session hold in store for primary and secondary education. One thing is for certain, however. It is incumbent upon educators and their professional associations to remain vigilant and engaged participants in critical public policy and funding discussions related to public education at both the state and federal level. AESA and your state associations will continue to serve as a source of information and advocacy.

Thank you to Craig Burford, Executive Director, Ohio Educational Service Center Association for contributing to this article.

### Sources:

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