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**Hearing on Obama's Education Agenda**

On Thursday May 20, 2009, [Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, testified](#) before the House Education and Labor Committee on the Obama Administration's Education Agenda. The "comprehensive agenda that addresses the needs at every level of our educational system, from expanding access to high-quality early childhood programs to improving the rigor of the academic programs in our K-12 schools to making college more affordable and accessible," was outlined by Secretary Duncan in attempts to gain Congressional support for the budget which includes funding programs "that work" and creating new programs aimed at creating efficiency.

Secretary Duncan argued the need to establish more funding through Title I that will encourage districts to develop and expand preschool programs, along with extending the Striving Readers program to \$370 million in order to "take a comprehensive approach to reading instruction, ensuring that students develop the basic skills as well as the reading comprehension that is so vital to their success in high school and beyond." The agenda would also include reinvesting into low-performing schools to accomplish a complete turnaround. According to Duncan, "I'd like to set a goal to turn around 1,000 low-performing schools a year for each of the next five years. I don't want to invest in the status quo. I want states and districts to take bold actions that will lead directly to the improvement in student learning."

However, when Secretary Duncan was asked what would happen to the students in the mean time, while the schools were in the process of "turning around" and if they would be given other options, Duncan simply replied that we need to "turn around the schools." What is important to note, in a hearing on the D.C. Scholarship Program that occurred last week, a boy currently enrolled in the program testified that the schools did not become bad overnight, and they will not get better overnight, therefore questioning what happens to those children currently enrolled in low-performing schools during this great reformation. Will a generation be lost?

The hearing also included discussion on teacher incentives, including alternative certifications as well as the support for reforming higher education loans and making college more affordable to all. While the majority of the issues discussed in the hearing received bipartisan support, Republican Member John Kline, criticized the agenda arguing there was not enough funding being provided to special education programs. [Ranking Member Howard McKeon also criticized](#) the abrupt end to the D.C. Scholarship Program, and encouraged the administration to support charter schools and look into other opportunities children and parents may be given.

Secretary Duncan did acknowledge that money is not always the answer when it comes to reforming the current schools system and bipartisan support would be necessary for successful results.

To Watch the Full Hearing: [Hearing on the Obama Administration's Education Agenda](#)

**The Ills of Sports Gambling**

Once again, major sports networks and associations, including the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), are speaking out and opposing legislation that legalizes internet gambling, stating in a letter to Congress, "sports wagering threatens the integrity of professional and amateur athletics." Just last year, the same organizations [stood up to oppose](#) legislation introduced by

Congressmen Barney Frank and Jim McDermott that would open the door for legalization of internet gambling. In a similar letter they wrote last year, the associations reasoned, “Sports gambling threatens both the actual and perceived integrity of athletic contests. It places athletes, coaches and other team personnel, as well as game officials, at risk of pressure and threats from gamblers and organized crime to affect the outcome of a game or reveal confidential information.”

On May 6, the threat to professional and amateur athletics returned to Congress. U.S. Congressman Barney Frank introduced the [Internet Gambling Regulation, Consumer Protection, and Enforcement Act \(H.R. 2267\)](#), to politically disable the Wire Act, allowing states to grant private licenses and gamble across state lines without being prosecuted. Rep. Franks’ bill never specifically refers to “the Wire Act.” In fact, the legislation calls for cooperation between those granted licenses and the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA). However, PASPA serves only to prohibit gambling done within the state, and does not prohibit gambling done across state lines. “Thus H.R. 2267 references a law that is irrelevant to interstate sports gambling (PASPA) in order to disable the only one that is meaningful (the Wire Act),” records the letter. Other points of concern of the bill include the following actions that it would require:

- Put the U.S. Treasury Department in charge of licensing online gambling operators and regulating their operation;
- Give online gambling operators a “get out of jail free card”: a license is a *complete defense against any prosecution or enforcement action under any other state or federal law*, if the gambling operator merely complies with the Treasury regulations;
- Deceptively *appear* to bar licensees from taking sports bets, but actually opens the door wide to sports gambling on the Internet;
- Is titled “consumer protection” legislation, but actually *exempts* gambling operators from any liability to compulsive gamblers, even if the gambling business fails to withhold gambling privileges from a person who has asked to be put on a “self-exclusion” list; and
- Purport to allow individual states and Indian tribes to “opt out” of allowing online gambling for residents, but gives Governors and tribal chiefs unilateral authority to make this decision, and there are no penalties for gambling operators having ineffective location verification.

The history of internet gambling legislation has drawn a tremendous opposition. With the company of all major athletic associations, families and conservatives will be able to have an outspoken voice on the dangers and threat in the legalization of internet gambling.

### **Actions Speak Louder than Words**

*Rhetoric is a poor substitute for action, and we have trusted only to rhetoric. If we are really to be a great nation, we must not merely talk; we must act big.”*

*~Theodore Roosevelt*

On May 17, President Obama gave the commencement address at the Catholic university, Notre Dame, with weeks of controversy stemming beforehand on the abortion issue. Many devout Catholics were appalled that the pro-choice President not only spoke at the ceremony but was presented with an honorary law degree. Protests were scheduled for the day of the commencement and 39 protestors were arrested, including Dr. Allen Keyes, former candidate for President. While those who opposed the President’s policies publicly displayed their position, President Obama defended his position in his [speech](#).

“Maybe we won't agree on abortion, but we can still agree that this heart-wrenching decision for any woman is not made casually, it has both moral and spiritual dimensions. [Q&A, Transcript: Outlook: Who Is a Real Catholic?Obama Tackles Abortion at Notre Dame](#)View Only Top Items in This StorySo let us work together to reduce the number of women seeking abortions, let’s reduce unintended pregnancies. Let’s make adoption more available. Let’s provide care and support for women who do carry their children to term. Let’s honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion, and draft a sensible conscience clause, and make sure that all of our health care policies are grounded not only in sound science, but also in clear ethics, as well as respect for the equality of women. Those are things we can do.”

President Obama seems to have swayed back and forth on the issue of abortion. He has given much talk about the reduction and prevention of unwanted pregnancies, while simultaneously pushing policies that will no doubt increase the number of abortions performed. His stance against life has [boosted the efforts of pro-life Americans](#), and at a time when America is lead by its first pro-choice President, pro-life Americans have also for the first time become a recorded majority. So what exactly is the President's position on abortion, and is he really representing American values whose majority lines up with pro-life principles?

The President's rhetoric throughout his campaign and carrying into his presidency has represented a moderate view of the issue, with many promises that would seem to satisfy pro-life Americans. He has stated many times the need to reduce unwanted pregnancies while giving women the care and support needed if they choose to carry their child to term. Yet, the President's actions are a far more radical approach to his words. During an economic crisis and within the first 100 days of his presidency, He successfully overturned the [Mexico City Policy](#), which provides taxpayer monies to fund abortion in foreign countries. He also has challenged the ['conscience protection'](#) regulations set by the previous administration. When speaking about his [health care plan](#) at a conference hosted by Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the world, he stated, "In my mind, reproductive care is essential care, basic care, so it is at the center, the heart of the plan that I propose." He also proposed his plan would make sure that "insurers are going to have to abide by the same rules in terms of providing comprehensive care, including reproductive care... that's going to be absolutely vital," striking away conscience protections from both the medical field as well as health care providers.

His radical policy on abortion can also clearly be identified by his [nominations in key positions](#). With the vacant seat opening on the Supreme Court, there is little doubt the President will fill it with an avid pro-choice supporter, considering he has filled his staff, along with every key nominated position with a pro-choice candidate. However, it is important to note that these nominees not only consider themselves pro-choice but are aggressively pushing the radical agenda, by siding with the President on issues such as favoring [partial birth abortion](#), and opposing the [born alive infant act](#).

Therefore, while the President remains to be influenced by special-interests groups and pushes the radical agenda on abortion, it is encouraging to see his efforts are being met with strong opposition. According to a [new Gallup Poll](#), 51 percent, a clear majority, define themselves as pro-life. The poll, conducted May 7-10, finds, "this is the first time a majority of U.S. adults have identified themselves as pro-life since Gallup began asking the question in 1995." Rev. Frank S. Page, a member that sits on the president's council for Faith Based and Neighborhood initiatives commented, "[President Obama is losing favor](#) with many who might have supported him at first but have become very disturbed with his actions on pro-life issues. Some of us have been disturbed with the rapid pace he has moved to dismantle some of the few protections that remain for the unborn." He also stated regarding the President's rhetoric, "The verbalization that he wishes to find common ground – we are just not seeing that." Though pro-life advocates are working hard to make sure legislation such as the [Freedom of Choice Act](#), which would do away with all regulations on abortion, never becomes law, they are very hopeful in legislation such as the Fetal Pain Awareness Act, which Senator Brownback has proposed in the past, along with the Pregnant Women Support Act, which would give resources to unsure pregnant women and encourage the young mother to carry her child to term.

As President Obama spoke at the commencement of Notre Dame, he included a story that exactly defines his position and side in the abortion debate:

A few days after I won the Democratic nomination, I received an e-mail from a doctor who told me that while he voted for me in the Illinois primary, he had a serious concern that might prevent him from voting for me in the general election. He described himself as a Christian who was strongly pro-life but that was not what was preventing him potentially from voting for me.

What bothered the doctor was an entry that my campaign staff had posted on my Web site an entry that said I would fight "right-wing ideologues who want to take away a woman's right to choose." The doctor said he had assumed I was a reasonable person, he supported my policy initiatives to help the poor and to lift up our

educational system, but that if I truly believed that every pro-life individual was simply an ideologue who wanted to inflict suffering on women, then I was not very reasonable. He wrote, “I do not ask at this point that you oppose abortion, only that you speak about this issue in fair-minded words.” Fair-minded words.

After I read the doctor’s letter, I wrote back to him and I thanked him. And I didn’t change my underlying position, but I did tell my staff to change the words on my Web site. And I said a prayer that night that I might extend the same presumption of good faith to others that the doctor had extended to me. Because when we do that when we open up our hearts and our minds to those who may not think precisely like we do or believe precisely what we believe that’s when we discover at least the possibility of common ground.

As President Obama so clearly stated, his position did not change. His words, his rhetoric, his language changed. Principle has been replaced with ‘fair-minded words’. As Theodore Roosevelt warned, rhetoric has become the substitute for action.

### **Safe Internet Alliance**

Identity theft, Cyber-stalking, Hacking, Illegal Content, Viruses, are just some of the dangers and threats posed by the internet. While the internet has become a dominant resource in today’s society, security and safety have also become a pressing issue. Personal identity and privacy are at risk with the overwhelming pressure of social networking websites. According to the Safe Internet Alliance (SIA), a non-profit organization devoted to establishing a [safer internet](#), “The explosive growth in people, devices and private information connecting to the Internet represents an exponential increase in vulnerabilities that bad actors can exploit, and that users must protect.” SIA was recently created with the mission “To promote a safe Internet and better educate and protect all users, especially children, teens and the elderly, from Internet corruption, crime, and abuse.” Offering resources, information, and innovating safe alternatives, SIA is beginning to promote their [goals and principles](#) to “advance an internet ethic” and to harness “the Internet’s user-choice model, where users and parents have the freedom to choose what they personally want from the Internet.” This organization could be a great resource for protecting one’s family, organization, church, or school from the potential risks and hazards of the internet.

For more Information Please Visit: [Safe Internet Alliance](#)

### **In Case You Missed It:**

[New Hampshire Legislatures Votes Down Same-Sex Marriage Bill](#)

[Gallup Poll: More Americans are Pro-Life](#)

[Alliance Defense Fund Sues Against Radicals](#)

[The Pulpit Initiative](#)



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