



## The Washington Flyer April 9, 2010

*In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, I believe the Bible is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this Book. But for this Book we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it.*

Abraham Lincoln, 1864

### States Skeptical about Race to the Top

Some states are now [skeptical](#) of the President's Race to the Top (RTT) program after only two states were awarded money last week. The initiative is designed to have states compete for funding by ramping up their state standards and regulations in an attempt to improve education reform. Forty states and the District of Columbia submitted proposals to the federal government in January in order to be considered for the grants. Nearly a dozen states changed their state education laws after the federal government recommended that they do so, yet only two states, Tennessee and Delaware, received an award. The Department of Education continues to tout the program as a success and intends to reward nearly 15 states in September of this year, right before the mid-term elections, which officials assure is by coincidence alone.

States, however, continue to weigh the benefits as they begin to reapply for the grants. According to Rick Miller, who as a Deputy Schools Superintendent led California's first-round Race to the Top effort, the discussion to continue on in the program has been a difficult one. "There's a serious conversation going on here about whether it makes sense to put all that time and effort in again to reapply," he said. A few governors have also expressed concern over how a state is selected to receive an award. Colorado made sweeping changes to its education system and had hoped to win \$377 million but instead ended up in 14<sup>th</sup> place. Colorado Governor Bill Ritter, Jr., emphasized the concern over "anonymous" judges stating, "It was like the Olympic Games, and we were an American skater with a Soviet judge from the 1980s." Many Coloradans view the contest as federal intrusion, and the Governor is unsure of whether they should reapply for the grants. He further stated, "Many tiny school districts don't like federal mandates. So even as I believe that school reform is important for our country, it's also important that people in Washington understand that one size doesn't fit all."

### Progressive Agenda for Early Childhood Education

The [New America Foundation](#) released last week a [policy paper](#) titled, "A Next Social Contract for the Primary Years of Education." This early education initiative is designed to give lawmakers the tools and research needed to form the "next social contract" in education by focusing on early education. According to the preface, "This paper lays out the case for a fundamental rethinking of public policy related to children's primary years in education, starting at age three and reaching up through the third grade." Throughout the presentation of the paper and research, Lisa Guernsey, co-author of the paper, emphasized the need for public education to be made available for children as young as three. She wrote, "It no longer makes sense to postpone the start of public education until children have turned five," and stated that public education should be referred to as "pre-K through 12" and that the gap between "birth to five" and "K-12" must be erased in order to have a smooth transition from "cradle to career." Lisa argues pre-K should be viewed as a "fundamental component of the

education system, not an optional add-on.” She also referenced parents who keep their child out of kindergarten till they are older as “red-shirting” their child by not allowing them to reach their full potential. The paper also calls for “key features” of the Pre-K-3<sup>rd</sup> initiative. A few of these “key features” include:

- Universal access to voluntary, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents want pre-K
- Universal full-day kindergarten
- Quality, developmentally appropriate curriculum and standards aligned from pre-K through third grade
- Qualified teachers with both a bachelor’s degree and specialized training in how young children learn
- Opportunities for teachers to share data, planning, and professional development within and across grade levels

At the releasing of the paper, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Education for Early Learning, Dr. Jacqueline Jones, fully embraced the findings and reiterated the need to focus on early education. She stated that the Department of Education will work closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to ensure that education for children birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will improve. She expressed the goal of the Department of Education to focus on early education through programs like Race to the Top and through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). She emphasized the most difficult challenge will be gaining funding through Congress and developing “common standards” among existing early education programs.

Not all organizations are quick to support government funded early education. Lindsey Burke of the [Heritage Foundation](#) has done extensive [research](#) on early education and finds that that more government funding for education during the early years will really just create an unnecessary subsidy for the middle class.

### **Obama’s Controversial Recess Appointment**

Just days after Members of Congress left for their Easter recess, the President made several [controversial](#) recess appointments. Recess appointments allow for the appointee to serve until the end of the current Congress, unless confirmed by the Senate. One of these appointments, Chai Feldblum, a lesbian Georgetown University Law Center professor, was appointed as Commissioner on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Since her appointment conservatives have voiced strong opposition to Feldblum, who is known as a prominent [pro-abortion](#) activist and as the primary author of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would prohibit employers from making hiring decisions based on “sexual orientation.”

Feldblum has been fighting for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) causes for nearly 20 years and has stated her intentions to “change the American workforce and revolutionize social norms. Our current public policies undermine the moral and political unit of same-sex couples and families and that’s a moral wrong that needs to be rectified.” Conservatives believe that Feldblum “would not be impartial in her decision-making process” and would use her position to influence lawmakers to pass ENDA.

The President made the recess appointment after Feldblum was unable to overcome a bi-partisan filibuster in the Senate. She will serve as the commissioner for the EEOC until the current Congress ends, unless she is confirmed by the Senate to the position permanently.

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

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACIS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Girl Scouts Hand Out Planned Parenthood "Pamphlet" at UN Meeting](#)

[Abortion Debate "Reignites" in States](#)



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