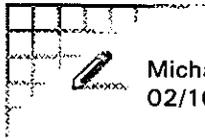


NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 020 - Folder 010

Education - NGA Event



Michael Cohen
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Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP
cc: Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP
Subject: Education at the governors

I'm working with ED on the NGA education announcement, and wanted to bring you up to speed and get your reactions:

1. We had originally planned on announcing a block grant proposal and an expansion of Ed-Flex to all 50 states. In anticipation of the TIMSS announcement the next day (and upon learning of the limited interest Dem. gov's apparently have in the block grant), we are backing off of the block grant idea, but not yet dropping it entirely. Riley may still be interested in it (perhaps with some kind of set-aside for math and science training--though I don't think this is a great idea). I've asked Jennifer Davis to double check on the Dem. gov's; if they are more interested than we currently think, Riley's idea may look better.

2. We are still moving ahead with Ed-Flex expansion to all 50 states. Remember, this demonstration program (limited to 12 states) allows state education agencies to waive many of the statutory and regulatory requirements in most federal K-12 education programs. In order to qualify under current law, states must have a comprehensive Goals 2000 education reform plan approved by the Secretary, and must show that they are as willing to provide flexibility to local districts with respect to their own state requirements.

The idea of the federal government approving a state's overall education reform plan had been a real problem for conservatives and for Republican gov's. We've subsequently dropped the requirement that the Secretary approve state plans from the overall Goals 2000 program, though it is still a requirement for participation in Ed-Flex.

I've proposed to ED that we drop the "approved plan" approach for Ed-Flex as well, and instead insist on a strong school accountability approach. Under this approach, in order to be eligible for ed-flex, the state must have standards, tests, school report cards and a strategy for intervening in low performing schools. The deal for states is that you get more flexibility if you show you are serious about accountability. ED is basically ok with this; we are working on the details now.

Are you ok with this approach? In particular, do you want to use this as the vehicle for requiring school report cards?

Second, ED is working on a report to states and districts (in response to one of our directives) on how to intervene in failing schools. There is a 50-50 chance this could be ready by NGA. If so we could have a package including Ed-Flex, school report cards, and fixing failing schools as the core of our announcement.

One more thing: There is a rumor that Goodling is holding a hearing on the tests that morning, and trying to get gov's to testify. I haven't been able to confirm that yet, but am working on it. Either way, we probably should have POTUS say something about the tests as well, though I'm not