



Week of Feb. 11-15, 2013

State of the Union = State of the Schools

By UCLA IDEA

In his State of the Union address, President Obama was largely silent on K-12 education policy, but said a great deal about issues that could have considerable effect on students' school success *if* his education and other domestic goals are further developed and pursued vigorously.

Preschool

Tonight, I propose working with states to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America. ... Let's do what works, and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance.

According to Obama, "study after study" shows that preschool is key to children's success for the rest of their lives, and he lamented that fewer than three of 10 4-year-old children have access to quality programs. After the speech, the White House circulated a fact sheet that was still too vague for many education advocates who found it unclear how the administration intends to persuade states to join and fund this great education need. For example, over the past decade, "states have cut preschool budgets by an average of \$700 per child." California has cut \$1 billion from early education programs, and about 110,000 preschool-aged children have lost preschool access.

Minimum Wage

Tonight, let's declare that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty, and raise the federal minimum wage to \$9.00 an hour.

Obama pointed out that a full-time minimum wage worker earns \$14,500 a year and in a family with two children that is below the federal poverty line. Research has shown that raising the minimum wage has positive effects on students. Relieved of some of the stress of poverty, parents demonstrate better parenting skills and children better behavior. And relatively small income supplements have been observed to affect elementary students' achievement by about 10 to 15 percent.

Safety and Security

Each of these [gun control] proposals deserves a vote in Congress. If you want to vote no, that's your choice. But these proposals deserve a vote. Because in the two months since Newton, more than a thousand birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries have been stolen from our lives by a bullet from a gun.

Since the December tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, communities around the nation have focused on policies that will keep students safe. New attention on gun control holds the promise of making students safer in their communities and as they travel to and from school. Similarly more mental health services generally and more counseling services at schools may help support safer school

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environments. Schools also need the policies, laws, and resources that allow them to merge their commitment to student security with their commitment to learning. Communities and schools need to provide supervised learning and healthful activities that extend well beyond the hours of a school day.

Immigration Reform

As we speak, bipartisan groups in both chambers are working diligently to draft a bill, and I applaud their efforts. Now let's get this done. Send me a comprehensive immigration reform bill in the next few months, and I will sign it right away.

Last year, through executive action, Obama issued young immigrants reprieves from deportation and temporary work permits. Like Dream Act legislation in California, Deferred Action is critically important, but a partial fix. Students should not have to worry that some future legislative body will take away their access to higher education or their right to remain in the country they call home. Nor should they have to fear that their family members would be deported. President Obama's visions of a pathway to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants may be the federal government's most powerful tool for strengthening parental involvement and promoting a more educated citizenry.

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