

Ohio Legislature Nixes Multistate Consortia

On June 4, 2014, the Ohio General Assembly passed Am. Sub. H.B. 487, an education budget correction bill. The bill contains a provision that states: “When the state board [of education] adopts or revises academic content standards in social studies, American history, American government, or science ... the state board shall develop such standards independently and not as part of a multistate consortium.” This in effect disallows the state from adopting the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), as well as any future multistate standards in social studies. In passing H.B. 487, Ohio asserts its right to formulate its own K-12 education standards.

H.B. 487 also establishes “academic standards review committees” in four areas – English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These committees are to review existing or proposed standards and statewide assessments for their appropriateness. Unfortunately, these seven-member committees will likely be highly political in nature, since the members are appointed by the governor, Senate President, House Speaker, state Superintendent, and Chancellor of the Board of Regents.

The legislature has also been concerned about a strong anti-Common Core movement in Ohio. In an attempt to ameliorate parents opposed to Common Core English and math standards, H.B. 487 contains a provision for each school district to establish a “parental advisory committee” or other method to review textbooks and other instructional materials. This requirement is unlikely to have much effect, however, since (a) most districts already have such a review process, (b) parental reviews seldom have much influence on selection of curricular materials, (c) districts are essentially forced to adopt instructional materials that are aligned with the state assessments, and (d) concern about Common Core goes much deeper than just textbook selection.

A strong anti-Common Core bill, H.B. 237, was introduced in mid-2013 by Ohio State Rep. Andy Thompson. This bill would effectively eliminate Common Core standards in the state, withdraw the state from the PARCC consortium, and institute measures to protect students and families from intrusive data collection. H.B. 237 has been stalled in the House Education Committee, due to the intransigence of committee Chairman Gerald Stebelton and House Speaker Bill Batchelder. The legislature is in recess until after the November election. There will be a short session at the end of the year during which the bill may still be considered.

On June 4, 2014, Rep. John Adams, Assistant Majority Floor Leader, announced that a “discharge petition” would be circulated to try to get H.B. 237 moving in the House. The discharge petition is a little used measure designed to address stalemates such as that engendered by H.B. 237. If a majority of House members (50 out of 99) sign the petition, the bill must be brought to the House floor for a vote. Rep. Adams and Rep. Thompson hope to gain the necessary signatures by November so that this important bill, with much grassroots support, can move forward.