

Bob Wise
Governor of West Virginia, 2001–2005

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To our distinguished presenters and guests:

I would like to personally welcome you to the Alliance for Excellent Education's fourth annual High School Policy Conference, *From No Child Left Behind to Every Child a Graduate*. Many of you traveled hundreds of miles and left behind families, important obligations, and busy schedules to participate in the next two days' events. For that, we can't thank you enough. As we gather for this conference, let me assure you of two things: Congress is taking action and your voice counts.

This is a momentous time to be in Washington. We meet this week to learn from the best minds and the best practices on high school reform affecting the most at-risk students. Just a few blocks away, Congress is contemplating these very same issues. The U.S. House of Representatives is marking up the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and the U.S. Senate will follow close behind. With reauthorization in full swing, your presence in Washington is critical. As you know better than most, this legislation has the potential to positively impact the educational achievement of every student across the country, particularly high school students who *were* left behind the last time this bill was authorized.

Individually and as a group, each of us plays an integral role in shaping NCLB into something tangible that will benefit our students. Through our efforts as advocates, researchers, practitioners, administrators, funders, business leaders, local officials, and parents, we all have a stake in the outcome of this law. At this time last year, our diligence and determination to build consensus on a shared federal policy agenda brought many of us together. Our efforts resulted in significant measures being included in the House discussion draft of NCLB, and we hope that success continues.

But our job is far from done. Remember, you are here this week for two reasons: to remind Congress that it should *continue to take action* on the high school reform measures included in NCLB and to ensure that we, as an education community, can *continue to build consensus* on what those high-quality provisions should look like, once implemented.

The reality is that we are a long way from the classroom, where our students and teachers face their biggest challenges and achieve their greatest successes. The burden, therefore, is on us to keep their needs in mind as we continue to challenge and improve the intellectual integrity of the best practices and evidence-based research that we share within the education community and with Congress. Let's remember to always reflect on our political and philosophical victories and to reaffirm that they are bringing us closer to our goal of making *every child a graduate*.

Thank you again for attending our fourth annual High School Policy Conference. Together, we will help shape the federal agenda for high school reform.

Sincerely,



Bob Wise
President