



Tennessee to “Replace” Common Core, But It Will Likely Be Back

Lawmakers in Tennessee voted overwhelmingly this week to “review and replace” the [Obama administration-backed Common Core standards](#), which have sparked a nationwide uprising among teachers, parents, and taxpayers that transcends traditional political divides. The bill, which the governor is expected to sign, drew widespread applause — at least from some quarters. However, the celebrations may have been premature, and not everyone is happy about the legislation that analysts say may ultimately do nothing more than rename the scheme after a “review.”



Among other concerns, critics pointed to the fact that the deeply controversial national standards will remain in place and intact for at least several more years. Even more troubling to opponents of Common Core, though, is that, [as happened in other states such as Indiana](#), some policymakers appear to be seeking to hoodwink the public. Instead of actually repealing and abolishing Common Core and its myriad tentacles, the legislation allows for the national standards to simply be rebranded and kept almost entirely in place under a new name. It also leaves the final decision in the hands of the state education board responsible for imposing the Obama-backed scheme in the first place.



The legislation, [HB 1035 in the House and SB 1136 in the Senate](#), was approved almost unanimously. State representatives voted 97 to zero in favor of the measure, and state senators voted 28 to one to support it shortly thereafter. At least one lawmaker publicly acknowledged that his constituents in both parties are “strongly” against Common Core. Republican Governor Bill Haslam, after indicating his satisfaction that the review of Common Core under the legislation would happen “in an orderly way, so our educators knew what to prepare for,” said he would sign it into law.

In public statements, lawmakers celebrated the supposed victory over Common Core. “This legislation is a template for all states to begin a much needed journey of separation from federally generated standards and an invitation to embrace each states’ own constitutionally delegated authority to serve its citizens at its own will, as our founders and God surely intended,” argued Republican state Representative Billy Spivey, the chief sponsor behind the bill.

Another state representative, Republican Andy Holt, the legislation’s chief co-sponsor in the Tennessee House, similarly tried to create the impression that Tennesseans no longer had anything to fear from



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the widely criticized standards pushed by Obama and the Big Government establishment. “I set out on a mission to do everything in my power to repeal Common Core in [the] State of Tennessee this year,” he said. “In addition to repealing Common Core, this bill puts even more control back in the hands of families, local schools and the State of Tennessee, which is exactly where it belongs.”

The problem is that the bill does not repeal Common Core, according to news reports, analysts, lawmakers, and the text of the legislation itself. Some local media outlets did pick up on what was going on. An Associated Press report published by WRCB in Chattanooga, for example, featured the headline: “Tenn. Senate sends bill to rebrand Common Core to governor.” The very first sentence explains that the legislation is to “rename and review” the Common Core standards. In other words, rather than getting rid of Common Core, the bill will simply rebrand it, perhaps with a few insignificant modifications, in what may be an effort to quiet the roar of angry voters.

One of the many hints that at least some establishment-minded Tennessee officials are hoping to dupe outraged citizens comes from the summary of the legislation itself. “These college-and-career-ready standards must be adopted through an open, transparent process that allows all Tennesseans an opportunity to participate,” the summary of the legislation explains. “College-and-career-ready standards,” of course, aside from being a contradiction, is the exact language used by the Obama administration when handing out “stimulus”-funded bribes to state governments in exchange for imposing Common Core.

The governor reportedly insisted that the “college-and-career ready” language remain in the bill — and it is hardly difficult to understand why. In an apparent effort to further conceal the true agenda and deceive citizens and lawmakers, an amendment to the bill ultimately changed the phrase to “post-secondary-and workforce-ready standards.” Of course, that means the same thing, and so Tennessee’s educational bureaucracy should have no problem keeping the federal Common Core bribes flowing.

At least one former lawmaker also drew attention to the scheming, and warned weeks ago that the bill did not actually kill Common Core. “However noble Rep. Spivey’s and Sen. [Mike] Bell’s intentions are their effort has revealed some serious flaws in the bill,” wrote former state lawmaker and current radio host Joe Carr in an op-ed last month, commending the lawmakers behind the effort but arguing that more was needed. “First, in Section 1 of the bill, the language to do away with Common Core is absent the one definitive word that does away with the Common Core State Standard. That word is ‘repeal.’”

Instead of that powerful word, Carr continued, the legislation mandates a review of the standards, and that they be replaced. “If you’re going to repeal Common Core, then use the word ‘repeal’ so as to be as clear as possible,” he added. “The Tennessee Code is no place for ambiguity. If you want to repeal Common Core, then say repeal.” Carr also highlighted the “college-and-career-ready standards” verbiage, which he said effectively means replacing Common Core with Common Core.

In an online statement about the bill, the grassroots group Tennessee Against Common Core pointed out the flaws, too. “Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice shame on me,” the organization said shortly before the legislation was approved. “People you are about to be fooled AGAIN. HB1035 is certain to pass. Even legislators that KNOW this bill is a ruse are supporting it. It is a feel good bill to quiet the opposition and most have fallen lock step with the program.”

At the national level, conservative groups were similarly unimpressed. “As Common Core repeal bills go, this one could certainly have been stronger,” wrote Logan Albright with FreedomWorks in an analysis of the legislation. “There is no language in the bill about testing requirements or the student



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data collection that is concerning to many parents, and the multi-commission process for replacing the standards will seem overly bureaucratic to many. Moreover, there is nothing in the bill forbidding standards common to a large number of states, or partnerships with the federal government on standards.”

While allowing for the possibility that there may be changes more substantial than a mere rebranding, Albright correctly observed that it will all be up to the commissions established under the new law to make that happen. Still, he argued that the bill, though “far from perfect,” was a good sign. “It is encouraging that so many lawmakers of both parties were able to agree that something has to be done to fix education,” he said. “As the public becomes more educated on the issue and more states fight to regain control over their education systems, we can look forward to stronger bills in more states, until we finally end Common Core nationwide.”

Shane Vander Hart with Truth in American Education, another national group that opposes Common Core, also suggested that the legislation was “a positive step in the right direction considering the alternative.” Vander Hart also had “concerns,” however. “It’s hard not to be skeptical of replacement bills of late because as we have just seen rebranding,” he wrote. “The biggest problem I have with this bill is that the State Board of Education has final say on the standards that are adopted. The Legislature cedes [its] oversight of the process.”

The public in Tennessee, of course, is no fan of Common Core. According to a poll by Vanderbilt University released late last year, just 38 percent of state voters supported the controversial standards — and most of those probably had little to no understanding of the scheme and its implications. Nationwide, surveys consistently show that, the more people learn about Common Core, the more they oppose it. The same Vanderbilt poll also revealed that an overwhelming majority of teachers in Tennessee supported abandoning the standards. For policymakers anxious for more taxpayer bribes from the federal government, though, public opinion on the issue seems to be practically irrelevant.

As this magazine has documented extensively, Common Core represents a dangerous effort to nationalize and [even globalize](#) American education. The standards are terrible, too, and the data-mining on children would make George Orwell blush. As such, the program must be resisted. It is too early to know for sure where Tennessee’s latest efforts will go. But considering similar measures in other states, and the establishment’s full-blown support for Common Core at all costs, it is definitely too early to celebrate. Americans should demand that their elected officials fully repeal the Obama-backed standards, and then stop accepting federal bribes from a bankrupt government that has only helped destroy the U.S. education system. The alternative is disaster.

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